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THE COMIC KINGDOM

RUDOLF PICKTHALL

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THE COMIC KINGDOM



THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON

From the only known portrait of Napoleon made during his residence at Elba. In the possession of Signor Forest of Porto Ferrajo. From a colour print in the collection of Mr. A. M. Broadley

THE COMIC
: KINGDOM :
NAPOLEON, THE LAST
PHASE BUT TWO
By RUDOLF PICKTHALL

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TO
MY WIFE

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From the only known portrait of Napoleon made during his residence at Elba. In the possession of Signor Forest of Porto Ferraio. From a colour print in the collection of Mr. A. M. Bradley.

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CHAPTER I

THE IRON HARBOUR

“**T**O-MORROW,” said Orestes, “we make a long driving affair. Dat is all right. I am an economical fellow. Leave everyting to me.”

We had decided, at the outset, to leave everything to Orestes. Of his perfect ability to beat down his fellow-countrymen in a bargain we already had ample proof ; of the profound contempt in which he held them we were never left in doubt.

“ Dis is a dam country,” he would say after each such encounter, twirling his moustache truculently. “ Ah ! dere is only one London ! ”

As the little local train jogged leisurely on its way to Piombino we reflected, with a pleasurable sense of adventure, on the world

—the great world we were leaving behind—the world last symbolised by the “Dirittissimo” with dusty coaches, long restaurant-car and giant engine standing there at Campiglia (in the midst of a wide flatness backed by towering hills with scarcely a dwelling in sight)—resembling nothing so much as a train that has come into the desert by mistake, has lost its way, and given up hope.

I once knew a little boy who wanted to be an engine-driver, but was deterred by the thought that if he were ordered to take a train, say, from London to Manchester, he might, like the girl in the play (though this did not occur to him), take the wrong turning.

This, in the mind of a genie, or other winged monster, flying over the dreary Maremma that December afternoon, and observing the becalmed express, might well have been the case with its driver. He, however, was bound for Rome—the bourne of all the world—we for the Unknown Land—for Elba, drawn thither by the spell of Napoleon. We said little as we jolted on until, pausing at a way-side station, Cecilia took occasion to peep forth.

“What place is this?” she enquired.

"I know not at all," said Orestes. "I am weary, Signora, for I am old and," with a mournful glance at his own rotundity, "'eavy."

"But there it is—written up," cried Cecilia, heedless of this poignant plea. "Don't you see? 'Poggio d'Agnello.' What does it mean?"

Orestes struggled to the window and adjusted his pince-nez.

"Poggio d'Agnello. Dat mean in your language 'Pity de lamb, pity de poor little lamb.'"

"What a funny name for a railway station," mused Cecilia.

"What I tell you?" demanded Orestes. "Dis is a dam country. All silliness."

Cecilia looked doubtful. Archibald from his corner looked up suddenly interested.

"What a beautiful idea," he said. "What is the legend? Whose lamb was it?"

"It may be it was Mary's—it may be, dey make 'im into muttons—I know not at all," was the dark response of Orestes. "Dat is my name too. D'Agnello. Oreste D'Agnello, Oreste de little lamb, de poor little lamb."

Orestes sank back in his seat with a sigh,

as the train moved heavily on. "Dere is no one, nobody, dat pity me," he announced. "When I am dead, I have no funeral affair."

"Don't talk so dreadfully," said Cecilia kindly. "There's no need to think of such things, and—you must have one, you know, anyhow; the authorities, the people, whoever they are, who see about these things—they'll make you have one."

"Signora," said Orestes solemnly, "I shall be de dead corpse. How can dey make me when I am dead?"

Cecilia shrank from pursuing the point. Orestes gazed sadly out of the window.

"I will 'ave no flower in my grave," he said.

"How can you talk like that?" protested Cecilia, deeply affected.

"I am a funny fellow," continued Orestes. "I will 'ave no flower in my grave. No funeral affair. Dere will be services in a church to tank God for my good life, and to pray for my sins."

Cecilia was too much moved to speak. Orestes sighed again. Archibald continued to puzzle out a little brochure (price ten

centesimi) concerning which Orestes had observed at Pisa (the scene of its purchase), "Ah—you please yourself—you are English gentilman—but me, Oreste, I would not be seen bearing on me such a book."

The train stopped again. "'Ere we get out," announced Orestes, restored to cheerfulness; "I go first if de Madame will excuse. You, sir, please send out to me de luggages."

We lost sight of Orestes for a moment, after the luggages had been duly sent out, and stood on the platform not knowing which way to turn, in no small fear lest some misguided person should venture to address us; for we should none of us have known what he was saying.

In truth we were a helpless company. We relied entirely on Orestes, and I think he knew it.

We were presently relieved by the well-known voice observing, just behind us, "Dat is done. You come dis way; you leave everyting to me."

Through narrow, featureless and somewhat squalid streets we picked our way, in the wake of the luggages which were trundled before us with the mails and other miscel-

laneous effects, till the houses broke away on either side, and we found ourselves on a tiny grey quay facing a tiny grey harbour. Beyond, in the blue roadstead, lay the steamer—with bows gracefully curved and raking masts and funnel—and beyond again, dark against the crimson sunset, the rocky peaks of Elba.

“To-morrow,” observed Orestes, when, after tumultuous tossing in a small boat, we found ourselves in comparative comfort on the steamer’s deck, “we make a long driving affair. We see all of Napoleon. Now I look for the luggages,” and he disappeared into the saloon.

Now this was a useful example of the tireless enterprise of Orestes. True, he might look for the luggages in the spot selected as long as he thought fit, but he would not find them for the simple reason that they were reposing on a conspicuous little pyramid in front of us.

After a decent interval he reappeared, furtively wiping his moustache. “All is right,” he declared, sinking into a seat. “Now we get dere. You see.”

Our fellow-passengers were so few that it

seemed hardly worth while for any person or corporation to run the little steamer, except on philanthropic lines. "I believe we're the only foreigners," exclaimed Cecilia in high glee.

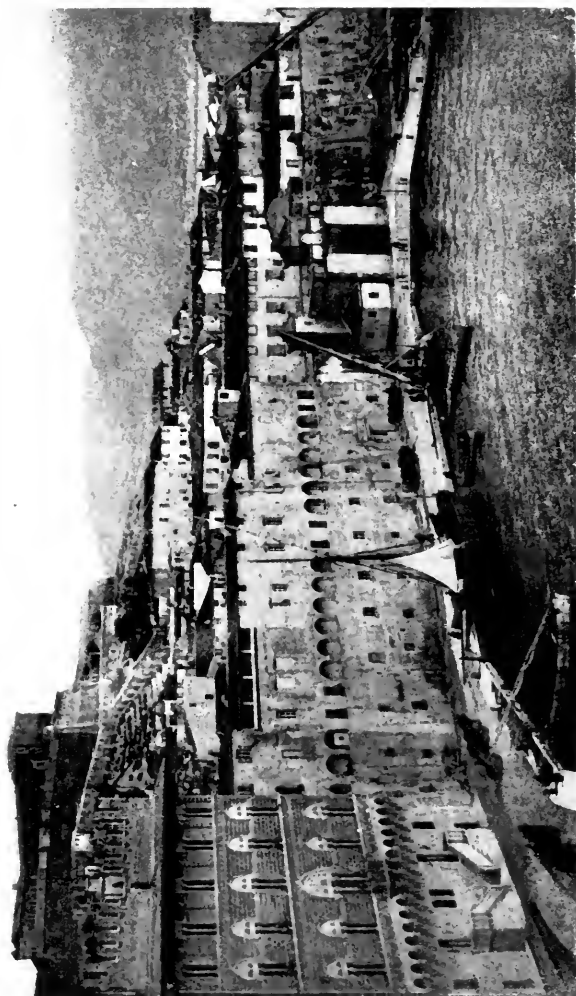
"No, no," said Orestes. "I am a funny fellow. Wherever I go, I find out all de tings. I make de friend wid everybodies. Dere is also as well a beastly German woman, and an English milord, and 'is Miss. Dey ask me 'oo you are. I say you are English milords and a miladi. Dey say dey are de same. It is all very facile—easy."

"Where are they?" asked Cecilia, deeply interested in such accommodating personalities.

"Behind de 'eap of luggages," said Orestes. "Dere are our luggages, I see! Ah! dat den is all right. Dey say dey tink dey be sea-sick—I tell dem no. Nobody is sea-sick when dey goes to de Isola d'Elba. It is only when dey come away. Den are dey sick—de sickness of de 'eart. I tell dem dis is no sea-sick affair."

It was dark when the little steamer swung slowly round and backed into Porto Ferraio, the Iron Harbour of Elba.

“To-morrow,” said Orestes sadly, as one recalling some long-forgotten refrain of the golden days of childhood, “to-morrow, we make a long driving affair. Dat is all right.”



THE QUAY, PORTO FERRAIO ; SHOWING THE HARBOUR GATE AND THE "GRAND STAIRCASE"

CHAPTER II

A "HISTERICAL" AFFAIR

PORTO FERRAIO—chief town of Elba and the seat of Napoleon's brief government—reminds one, in arrangement, of a Hotel.

Leaving the quay and entering by a low-pitched gateway (which may do duty for the front door), the visitor finds himself in the Hall—that is, the main street of the place, an oblong square if the phrase be permitted—where are the shops, the newspaper kiosk and the market. Crossing the Hall he reaches the Winter Garden, Palm Court, or whatever other designation be deemed suitable for a tiny garden in the midst of a tiny piazza, at the corner of which he will come upon the main staircase. This mounts with broad shallow steps of stone to the fort at the very summit of the hill whereon the little town is clustered—small

streets branching off therefrom at each landing, in the manner of corridors. From the top of the grand staircase I surveyed the panorama of bay and mountain, marred a little in the foreground by the tall blackened chimneys of the smelting furnaces. Behind me rose the low unimposing façade of the Mulini, which was the city residence of the ten months' monarch of Elba—with his annual subsidy of Fr. 2,000,000 (no franc of which, by the way, was ever paid) from the House of Bourbon.

From its windows, so mused I, for these were fitting meditations, the arch-humourist, already contemplating an easy flight, would look forth with an inward chuckle upon the single British warship—latterly the corvette *Swallow* (Captain Adye)—sole representative of Europe's vigilance, lying at anchor in the bay, the while, below him, throngs in brilliant uniforms jostled each other gaily on the crowded quay.

For it is said that in that memorable reign of King Napoleon I, Elba was exalted to the giddy regions of comic opera. Everybody was an official, everybody wore a uniform, everybody was irresponsible and happy. Such



PORTO FERRAIO : THE HARBOUR FROM THE HEIGHTS

a state of things might well, one would have thought, put Europe on its guard. It is possible that the Humourist himself, with the arrogance of genius, intended that it should—for Napoleon lacked not the sporting element in his many-sidedness. But Europe slumbered on, secure in the thought of the British guardship, and of Colonel Campbell—the exile's harassed custodian—whose suspicions were laughed to scorn. "Napoleon," said a distinguished diplomat, Mr. Secretary Cook, to the anxious Colonel. "Napoleon! Europe has forgotten Napoleon!" and yet within five days of that historic speech the bird had flown, Elba was kingless, and the Hundred Days had begun.

Pondering on these things I turned and descended the grand staircase to the little Hotel of the Elban Bee, which is perched a few feet above the Palm Court, or Winter Gardens—a snug place, the discovery of Orestes—on the verandah of which the party was assembled. I observed with annoyance that Cecilia and Archibald had already taken advantage of my absence to fraternise with our mysterious fellow-travellers of the night before.

As I mounted the steps, the milord advanced, raising his hat. "My name, sir, is Harrison. Colonel Harrison. Your wife, sir," he said, "has been kind enough to suggest that my daughter" (I bowed stiffly) "and this lady," indicating the "German woman" (I bowed as before), "should accompany your party this morning——"

Cecilia hastened to explain. "We're all so dreadfully interested in Napoleon, and I thought it would be so nice if we could all see the relics together—it's so much jollier."

I had had a foreboding that something of this kind would certainly happen. My faint hope that British Reserve would come to the rescue was put out—we were on an island—the only British there, in the same hotel—the only guests there—the thing was foredoomed. I tried to look gracious—not to say cordial; to utter hearty things worthy of an Englishman—and succeeded, I think, moderately well, but the thought that we should now need two carriages instead of one made it difficult. After all, money is money.

A glance at the square just below us showed that this contingency had been already foreseen. Two carriages—or what had once been

carriages—were in waiting, and Orestes was mounting the steps.

"All is ready," he announced, sticking his thumbs in his waistcoat. "We go dis morn-ing and see all of Napoleon affair—de Villa San Martino—a beautiful place. I have found very good cabmen. Dey know all about 'im."

Into the first carriage climbed Cecilia, the "Miss," and—while Archibald was hesitating—the "German woman," whose name it appeared was Fräulein Braun, and whose vocation it was to instruct and supervise the "Miss." Milord Harrison also climbed in, to our surprise; we did not think he was coming. Archibald seemed nettled, and he joined Orestes and myself in the second chariot. "We stop," said Orestes, "at de great palazzo on de Quay for permission affair."

The carriage rattled off, through the gateway and over the stones of the quay, whips crack-ing, drivers emitting curious cries like belated birds, or milkmen; passengers holding on grimly to anything they could find. The "permission affair" was soon disposed of, and off we started again. There is only one road leading out of Porto Ferraio, and for the first

mile or two it is not—despite a superb encircling horizon of mountain peaks and occasional flashes of the sea—an inspiring one. Grimy little shops, that look as if all their stock had been sold out centuries before, and had left no profit wherewith to buy new, succeeded each other, punctuated at frequent intervals with boards bearing the sign “Bar” (symbol of the unique efficacy of the English tongue, all the world over wherever liquid refreshment is contemplated), led presently to grime of a different nature. The huge blast furnaces—tall chimneys rolling forth the blackest of black smoke, smaller “affairs,” as Orestes might have called them—belching tongues of flame, clearly visible in the bright sunlight, strange steel spiders’ webs criss-crossing the road—little tram-lines intersecting it—Industrialism in its sootiest form, embedded in this Island of Romance.

Gradually the squalid houses grew fewer—stretches of cultivated land intervening. It would be in place here, I know, to state what crops were raised on these patches, but I do not suppose that Napoleon bothered himself much on that head, and I am certain that Orestes did not know—or if enquired of

would have given an inaccurate reply. Therefore I leave those patches of cultivated ground to bear anything the reader may prefer, from potatoes to pineapples. As a matter of fact, I do remember having observed cauliflowers in great profusion.

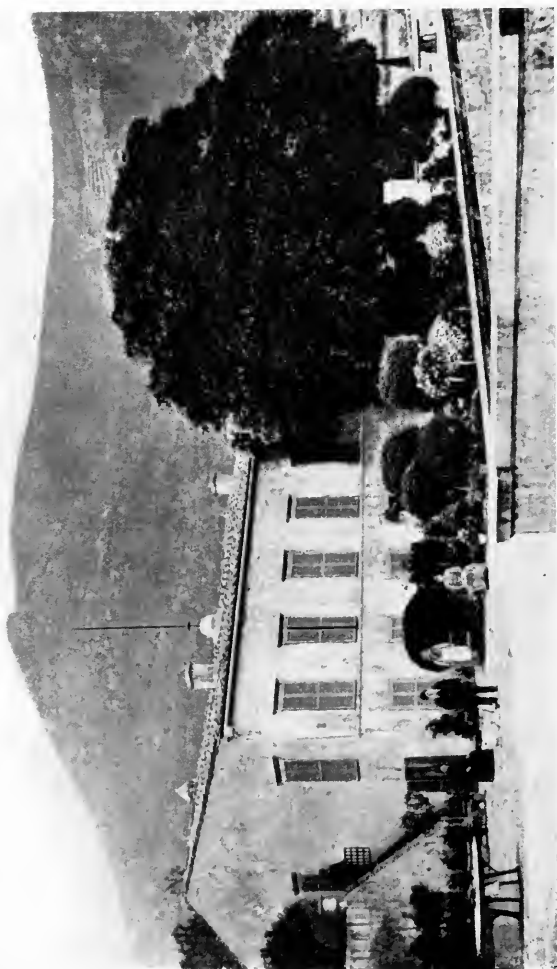
Orestes took from his pocket a long black cigar, such as Italians love, and cut it in two. He returned the one half to his pocket and lighted the other. "Dis is a histerical affair," he remarked, leaning back comfortably, for in the absence of admiring onlookers, the fury of our going had somewhat abated. "Ver' interesting." Archibald still seemed vexed, and was principally employed in leaning out to observe the progress of the chariot in front, the hood of which, flapping merrily behind, effectually obscured the persons of those within. "We see all of de great Napoleon," continued Orestes complacently, "and we bring away wid ourselves pleasant memory. We see where 'e sleep, 'e walk, 'e sit, and ze great histeric museum full of ze relics. Ze road dat go away on de left" (Orestes had his back to the horse), "is for Marciana—it is ver' beautiful, and more still of Napoleon is dere. Now we are enter-

ing ze road to ze Villa San Martino—where ze great Napoleon was in his exiles.”

The branch road which has the Villa San Martino for its sole objective is about a mile in length, dipping down from the Marciana highway—which coils away for miles up into the maquis—about twenty minutes’ drive from Porto Ferraio. It is a road of nubbly places, like hillocks, intersected by chasms, over which the carriage reels drunkenly at a foot’s pace. It seems incredible that, with such a bourne at the end of it, steps have not been taken to keep it in some sort of repair.

“Dis is a dam country,” said Orestes by way of comment on our unspoken thought, after a brief colloquy with the driver, “and dey are all dam lazy fellows. I ask ze man why dis road remain so cattiva. ’E say ’e is very bad, but dey are going to ’old meeting affair about it. Dat is what ’e say.” It sounded quite like England.

Archibald, already vexed at his disappointment, recovering with some little effort from a jolt of more than usual seriousness, enquired—hastily I fear: “It’s a perfect disgrace. What are people coming to, I



VILLA SAN MARTINO

wonder—in this country of all countries? I shall certainly write to the papers."

Orestes replied with crushing mildness: "Mr. Archibald is excited—how you call it—wrathful—de meeting come off—oh, any time. Dey say dey 'ave been calling 'im dis long time, but"—as the chariot gave another portentous lurch—" 'e 'ave not 'eard."

We drew up at the entrance to an avenue, guarded by a new and monstrous building of reddish stone, from which hung, like the festive trappings of a gala day, stockings, shirts and underclothing, as though in honour of our coming.

" 'Ere we leave de carriages," announced Orestes. "Dis is San Martino—where de great Napoleon did live. Now we walk up de avenue. Dis a most histerical place."

CHAPTER III

SAN MARTINO

SAN MARTINO — Napoleon's country residence, where he kept his six cows, set an example to his subjects by selling his vegetable produce, and was wont to scurry, with coat-tails flying, after wayward chickens (the while admiring tourists stared reverently) — lies in a cup of the hills, some three miles to the south of Porto Ferraio. If the Emperor were to return to-day he would probably have some ado to recognise his little white-walled villa set in its garden of shaded alleys. Not that the villa itself has changed materially, but that now a more pretentious villa San Martino rises behind it, higher up the mountain side, while below, the museum with its long pillared façade—in the classical style—built by Prince Anatole Demidoff in honour of his imperial uncle-in-law, faces northward down the valley, striking the ap-



THE DEMIDOFF MUSEUM AND VILLA SAN MARTINO

proaching pilgrim with a stinging sense of incongruity.

This was verily "a hysterical affair," as Orestes had pointed out, so far at least as Archibald was concerned. Archibald had regained the side of the fair Miss Harrison and the two were laughing in a manner which, in the circumstances, was scarcely seemly. Milord Harrison paced gravely by the side of Cecilia. The German lady attached herself as though by instinct to Orestes. I walked alone. And thus we passed up the long avenue of tiny trees.

The museum, with spread eagles perched at each angle, is hedged about with tall railings and gates of wrought-iron bearing the letter "N" in gilt and great profusion. But we did not at that time bother ourselves about the museum. There would have been no one to let us in, if we had. Instead, we ascended a steep roadway, escorted by the two cab-drivers, who seemed to take a deep and friendly interest in all we did, until the next plateau was gained, where stood, on the left, the modern excrescence, on the right the bourne of our pilgrimage.

I could never find out whether or not Elba

enjoys any recognised "season"; but I am sure that December is not it.

"Most extraordinary," said Milord Harrison, looking round him as we stood waiting, while the cabmen scattered in search of some living being.

"Not a bally soul about. What? My daughter here, Irene, she's jolly good at this sort of thing. Top-hole, I can tell you. If only we could get in—she's as good as any guide chap."

"No," said Cecilia, assuming the incredulity of politeness. "How awfully jolly."

"It is all dam silly business, dis histerical affair," muttered Orestes under his breath. "I would be in England!" He sat down heavily on a grass bank, putting his umbrella and coat beside him.

"Fact, I assure you, sir. Word of honour as a soldier. Why, when she was quite a kiddy, she used to stand and proclaim—*proclaim*, sir—historical facts from the hearth-rug. We called her the Family Herald. *What!*" Here the milord laughed consumedly, and so did we, out of deference to this newly developed truculence of manner.

"'William the Conqueror, 1066,' and all

that kind of rot. What ! ” and the milord’s laughter rumbled again, till he grew purple in the face.

“ Ach ! but how is it beau-u-utiful,” crooned Fräulein Braun to Orestes ; “ vere de grea-at Napoleon did leeve, een dis beau-u-utiful island.”

“ I go look for dese cabmen fellows,” said Orestes, hastily rising. But it was too late. Escape was impossible.

As he uttered the words, the two cab-drivers appeared in triumph leading captive a little man with a grizzled moustache, and garments of a kind of prevailing neutral tint—yet each item different from the next. Otherwise arrayed he might well have passed for a diplomat or some other person of distinction. As it was, he stood among us humbly with doffed cap, waiting our pleasure. Orestes approached, and after a short colloquy turned to us. “ ’E say ’e de gardener fellow. ’E show you everyting of Napoleon. You go wid ’im.”

Already the little man had opened the front door, and the troop of us were on his heels, Orestes waddling mournfully behind. He seemed to be singing to himself, but in

the excitement of the moment I could catch neither tune nor words—except what seemed to be some fleeting allusion to England.

We entered the “Salle des Pyramides.” The signs of the Zodiac might be observed, in mosaic, adorning the floor. On the walls Egyptian columns, and minarets, a pyramid or two, charges of Mamelukes and other commemorative symbols of old-time victories, proclaimed the atmosphere which the Exile had intended to convey in his scheme of decoration.

But this same scheme of decoration was but a peg for the arch-humourist to hang yet another jest on. We learn from the “Memorials of Saint Helena,” that “the finest artists of Italy disputed for the honour of embellishing the Imperial apartments.” Doubtless many of the simple ones who put faith in the printed word have swallowed this assertion without choking. But a glance will convince the earnest enquirer that either the finest artists of Italy must at that period have been a singularly poor lot, or else, which is more probable, that the work was done cheap by some house-decorator in Porto Ferrario, for, from an artistic standpoint, you will



VILLA SAN MARTINO : THE HALL OF THE PYRAMIDS

see masterpieces of equal excellence adorning tavern walls in that or any other tiny Italian town.

To add to the Egyptian character of the apartment an octagonal basin of white marble, some three feet deep, yawns in the midst of the white marble floor. This was clearly intended to receive a fountain—but the fountain never arrived. The only purpose it serves to-day is to give a nasty jar to such short-sighted folk as may step into it un-awares.

At the foot of one of the big painted pillars the words “Ubicunque Felix Napoleon” hint at some of the little tricks resorted to by the exile to prove to Colonel Campbell and the countless spies that continually hovered round, that he was placidly content in the seclusion of his island kingdom, and yearned no more for the great world without.

Such, in the general opinion, is the Hall of Pyramids; but Orestes, after consultation with the gardener, had a new view to broach.

“Dis,” he announced, assuming the rôle of guide, “is de Japanese apartment, as you, Mr. Archibald, will quickly see. ‘Ere,” continued Orestes, waving a fat brown hand,

"de great Napoleon 'e sit and—'ow you say—chew de cud, tinkin' of 'is great fightings far away in China. Dis is all Chinese, Japanese affair." Orestes smiled benignly.

Milord Harrison seemed taken aback. "Look here, Irene. You ought to know all about this kind of thing. Was he ever in China?"

Irene blushed deeply and giggled. "I—I don't know, papa. He may have been—don't you think so?" This to Archibald, who stood regarding Orestes with a bewildered gaze.

"There's some mistake," said Archibald; "he was never in China—and besides—the Hall of Pyramids! Don't play the fool."

"I play no fool," spluttered the indignant Orestes, sticking his thumbs in his waistcoat, and straddling fat legs far apart as was his wont when roused. "I just tell you wot de gardener fellow say. 'E 'ave lived 'ere. 'E know, and de cabmen fellows, dey too 'ave lived 'ere. Dey know all of Napoleon." And, mystified, we passed into the *salon*.

The *salon* is principally remarkable for the embellishment of its floor, whereon, in an azure heaven, two doves are represented,

enlaced by a ribbon, of which it is said the bow tightens the more the birds appear to be apart the one from the other. The design, as I have since read, was Napoleon's own—the doves symbolising himself and Marie Louise, whose coming he constantly looked for during the early weeks of his reign.

Orestes gazed at the doves dully, feeling, doubtless, that comment was needed. He conversed with cabmen and gardener, but could get no light from them. At length he sighed—"Dis is a painting affair," he said. "It has nodings of Napoleon, I tink. Now you come wid me. Now we see de sleeping apartment of de great Napoleon. You come wid me. We see 'is bed, and de chair where 'e sit."

Through a door on the right we entered the bedroom. The furniture is of the simplest, and there the pilgrim is shown the bed of Napoleon.

Needless to say, we were all, as eighteenth-century stateliness would phrase it, "a prey to the liveliest emotions." Here the fallen Emperor without doubt passed many a night of bitter reflection, the eye of his mind turning ever, wistfully, towards Versailles. Orestes was

profoundly impressed. Disengaging his overcoat from the arm on which he was carrying it, he placed it reverently on the squat, boat-shaped bedstead of acacia wood, and turning, spoke to the gardener, waving his arms and shaking his forefinger in the impressive manner common with Italians when they make a remark about the weather.

As I gazed at the wicker chair, the wash-hand stand and the other commodities suitable for bedrooms, round which even now the rest of the party were clustering—Milord Harrison ejaculating, “This is damned interesting. *What!* All the very same, you know, that the johnny used to use—Gad!—makes one feel deuced queer—*what!*”, while Irene gazed at a water-bottle with a face of awe, and Archibald murmured in her ear something about the vistas of the past and the great ones gone before—my conscience smote me, and I slipped away from the reverent throng.

I passed alone through two other bedrooms, one—which an inscription assured me had been assigned to Grand Maréchal Bertrand, the man who could not see a joke—containing a huge four-post affair heavily gilded; the

other, the apartment of General Drouot, bare of all furniture; then descending a narrow stairway, steep as that from a steamer's bridge—indeed, one could not help wondering how the portly monarch of Elba managed to get down it every morning to his bath—I came upon the lower floor. Here, on the wall of the bath-room—the bath at least, I reflected, is a genuine relic—is a faded fresco of a nude woman holding before her a mirror, which, from the inscription,

“Qui odit Veritatem odit Lucem,”

seems to have been intended to symbolise the mirror of Truth. Think not the exile a hypocrite for this. Though men love many things in the abstract, which they find inexpedient when put in practice, it would be unjust for that reason to brand them “humbug.” He loved the Truth—no man more—but it was the Truth he managed to extract from other people, rather than the Truth that other people generally failed to extract from him, and yet in a sense he must have loved that Truth as well, to guard it so jealously.

The rest of the party I could hear above the stairs, exclaiming at the magnificence of

the bed of Bertrand (which is not his bed at all, but that of Madame Mère—the Emperor's mother). I had no wish to join them at the moment. A door, open, invited me to step outside, which being done I found myself on a vast stone terrace, which is nothing more nor less than the roof of the Napoleonic Museum of Prince Demidoff.

The day was bright and sunny, and mild enough for a traditional English June. The broad sweep of the bay of Porto Ferraio lay before me—with the little patches of cultivated land varied with blots of dull, colourless green, and stray houses dotted here and there—the chimneys of the blast furnaces, and the town clustered at the northern rim, climbing the hill to the same citadel where one May morning in 1814 the sentry espied the English frigate in the offing slowly drawing near, bearing to innocent and unsuspecting Elba her future king.

It seemed sad to reflect that Milord Harrison and his fair charges, that the soulful Archibald, ay, that the impetuous Orestes himself, were all squandering the wealth of their emotions on unworthy things.

The bed upon which Orestes had so rever-



THE TERRACE ; VILLA SAN MARTINO, WINDOW OF NAPOLEON'S BEDROOM ON LEFT

ently placed his coat is not the bed of Napoleon. Had the pilgrims but thought a little, they might have recalled the damning fact that the Emperor's penchant was for iron bedsteads, of which he had three while in Elba. Thus he writes to Bertrand from Monte Giovo, where he was staying for coolness' sake in the summer of 1814, in a letter full of little homely chit-chat about lamps, window-blinds and the like: "I have got my three iron bedsteads; I have sent one down to Marciana for Madame Mère."

The rest of the furniture of the historic sleeping chamber has, I believe, been bought in comparatively recent years in Porto Ferrajo. The very museum below us to-day contains nothing but stuffed birds, fishes and similar delights, lured from the immediate neighbourhood.

The comprehensive collection of Napoleonic relics which Prince Demidoff had brought thither were, at his death, dispersed and sold by his heir and nephew. It is a great pity—a pity for the Island of Elba, and for those that journey thither on pilgrimage. But though to find the genuine souvenirs of the Emperor that remain, it is necessary, for the

most part, to gain access to a few—very few—private houses in Porto Ferraio, the magic of Elba is in no way impaired. King Napoleon left indelible marks of his passing—good government, the making of roads and draining of marshes, the self-respect, not to say dignity, engendered in the hitherto neglected population by the kingship suddenly forced upon them that sunny May morning, whereby for ten months they were destined to keep the nerves of Europe on edge ; these at least remain.

Such ruminations induced by the immediate surroundings, the sunny landscape rolled out before me, the mysterious blue of the seaward horizon, and divers other causes too numerous to mention, were disturbed by Orestes.

“ I get very weary of dis affair,” he said, twirling his moustache. “ I have placed my coat on de bed of de great Napoleon. Dat is happy memory I take away wid me. Dat is enough. But dese womans dey are dam nuisance. I do not like dem. I tink we better leave to-morrow.”

“ We shall do nothing of the sort,” I said sharply. “ We haven’t been here a day yet.”

" Ah, but dere is nodings more to see in dis dam island ; I ask de gardener fellow. He say, ' You see San Martino, you see all de tings. Dere is nodings more.' I tink you better give 'im five franc."

I refused point-blank. " To-morrow," said I, " we must drive somewhere else."

" As you wish, sir," and Orestes sighed. But he was not yet routed. " I fear for Mr. Archibald and dat 'Arrison girl. I tink she no dam good. 'E look at 'er eye all de time. I am a funny fellow. I watch all de tings. It is all silliness ; I tink we better leave to-morrow."

" Mr. Archibald can look after himself," said I, " and we do not leave to-morrow."

" As you wish, sir," said Orestes, and he sighed more deeply still. " I tink dere be storm affair," he continued, gazing up at the cloudless blue. " Wind and rain and electricity. We are 'ere on an island—perhaps we are not able to get away. But it shall be as you wish, sir."

" Ah—here you are ! " broke in the voice of Cecilia. " What a perfect view ! Isn't it heavenly ! "

" Perfectly sweet ! " chimed in Irene.

“It reminds one, don’t you think, of the youth of the world,” said Archibald. “When everybody was a shepherd and used to sing to each other for goats and cheeses and things like that. It takes one back, don’t you think—”

“Oh! it does,” cried Irene, enraptured. “What quaint old times they must have been! I’m sure” (here she blushed prettily) “if I won a goat I shouldn’t have the least *idea* what to do with it.”

“But cheeses are such useful things, dear,” said Cecilia. I observed with misgiving that they had reached the “dear” stage already. “Such a very useful prize.”

“But I don’t eat cheese,” explained Irene, with charming candour.

“Rum thing that,” bawled Milord Harrison; “none of our family eat cheese. *What!*”

Orestes, who had vanished the moment the party had emerged, now returned and announced, “De carriages is ready.”

“It has been horribly interesting,” said Cecilia as she climbed into her chariot.

“Fancy seeing the very bed where he slept. It made me feel quite creepy, and then I wanted to cry.”

“ That’s just how I felt, dear. A sort of a ghostly, shivery feeling. And the looking-glass that he used to shave at—horrible ! ”

“ I did place my coat on ’is bed—de bed of de great Napoleon,” sighed Orestes ; whereat the ladies cried delightedly, “ No—did you ? —oh, how I wish I’d thought of that ! ”

“ I carry away a happy memory,” said Orestes.

I had no heart to undeceive them.

CHAPTER IV

THE ELBAN BEE

THAT same evening we sat out on the little verandah of the Hotel of the Elban Bee and sipped our coffee. At least, the others sipped it. Personally, I detest coffee and am always at a loss to understand why so many persons, in other respects sane, deem no dinner complete without this nauseous black compound, to take away the pleasant flavour of what has gone before. I have known people in country districts who make a point of asking one another to one another's houses "to coffee" of an evening. Vain entertainment! Barren but inexpensive hospitality! Not that the Elban Bee's coffee was more nauseous than any other coffee. If anything it was superior. In fact, and I write it with due solemnity and a clear sense of my responsibility in so doing, in the matters of catering, quality of food

and cooking there was very little left for the Bee to learn. We came to respect and reverence the Bee before we left. Many have done so before us—many will do so in the time to come.

The Bee has other things to recommend him. His hotel is scrupulously clean—a rare blessing still in the less frequented parts of Italy—his beds among the most comfortable known. But the Bee has, or had, three drawbacks. When Orestes, on behalf of the party, demanded the whereabouts of the bathroom, the Bee's look of blank amazement abashed us all. When Orestes, prompted by Milord Harrison, to whom the finer feelings were negligible things, demanded that we should be supplied with portable baths, we were ready to sink into the ground with shame—such was the sorrow, the bewildered expression akin to humiliation, in the kindly countenance of the Bee.

Milord Harrison was indignant. "Dirty swine!" he bellowed. "Not a bath in the house!" Orestes shrugged shoulders, deprecating. "What I tell you?" said he. "Dese peoples all dam swine. Lazy fellows. Dey say, 'De good God—'e make no bath, and 'oo are we?'"

Secondly, the Bee has nothing which could properly be described as a sitting-room, drawing-room or anything of the kind. This affected the ladies to a certain extent—but the weather being warm, the verandah, with its little round tables and twining greenery, made a pleasant substitute.

The third drawback was slightly more embarrassing. Cecilia and I found it difficult to decide which of the buttons at the end of long cords that twined around the bed represented the bell, and which the electric light.

In consequence, she pressed the one that after a minute examination seemed the more likely to extinguish the light, and the light remaining on, we nervously awaited the arrival of the chambermaid, which was commendably prompt. A one-sided colloquy ensued lasting twenty minutes (we being ignorant of the tongue, and Orestes unavailable), after which the damsel, having hard work to restrain her mirth, made a hurried exit.

The evening was pleasantly cool. Lights burned here and there in the tiny piazza. The great world trickled before us, in ones

and twos, up and down the grand staircase of Porto Ferraio. We had got back from San Martino in time for lunch, and the afternoon had been judiciously spent in rhapsodies on the view, and the purchase of picture post-cards. For the evening, repose on the verandah seemed desirable. As I have said, one could from thence see the great world pass to and fro. Twanging guitars from unknown quarters lent an air of romance to the soft December night. A man's voice, in the piazza, bawling a palpable love-ditty, added thereto. Archibald felt it too, I could see. He was searching in his pockets for a poem, and Irene was gazing at him in rapt expectation. I determined to speak to Archibald severely on the morrow. Philandering I have ever abhorred, and he, barely two-and-twenty, had no right to talk and behave to a simple trusting girl—such for courtesy's sake I took Irene to be—as if the wisdom of the ages had been imparted to him suddenly by divine inspiration. It was not playing the game.

Milord Harrison was relating anecdotes of his old campaigning days (I have no accurate idea as to where he campaigned, but fancy it

must have been in India or Northern Nigeria) to Cecilia and Fräulein Braun. It seemed to me an admirable opportunity for making a start with my great historical prose epic, "Napoleon, the last Phase but Two"—but the moment was, alas, not yet.

Orestes appeared from the door, leading the landlord captive. "'Ere is de padrone," he said, introducing the Bee, who bowed to each and all of us, and stood smiling and rubbing his hands. Orestes explained. "Dis fellow," he said, "'e tell us all dere is to see." "But," I pointed out, "you said there was nothing left to see. That this morning we had seen everything." "It was de gardener fellow—'e tell me dat. But 'e is a liar—dey are all liars dese peoples—dam lazy fellows." Here the Bee made some observations, to which Orestes replied with bows and gesticulations.

"'E say, dere is 'ere, in Porto Ferraio, de Mulini Palace, where de great Napoleon 'e live most of de times. Where 'e 'ad de great balls and conversazione, and where 'e used to play cards with Madame Mère and 'is generals. Dat is very interesting.

"'E say in de Municipio we see de great flag

of Elba, de same identic one de great Napoleon chose on de morning of de day when 'e make intrato triumphal into Porto Ferraio. Ah, dat was a great day; 'e say, de great guns dey fire, and de flags wave, and de peoples sing, and in de evening time everybody light demselves. One time dey did 'ave de coffin of Napoleon 'ere, but 'e say dey move it to other parts of de isla."

I had had an idea that the coffin of Napoleon reposed at the Invalides, and demanded information on the point.

Orestes replied, "Dis is not de real coffin—but dey 'ave funeral affair every year for de honour of de great Napoleon. All de bigwigs is in church, and dey sing masses. It is very grand affair. Dat is all in Porto Ferraio, 'e say, but dere is much beautiful tings outside. 'E say we spend a month, two, tree months 'ere in de Isola d'Elba, and still dere is beautiful tings to see——"

I may here break off to expound the mystery of the coffin. The head of Napoleon was shown, until recently, I believe, in a church in Porto Ferraio. The visitor found himself standing before a huge coffin of ebony surrounded by silver flambeaux. Then his

cicerone would slide away a panel, revealing a bronze mask of Napoleon with the eyes closed. This is an exact replica of that modelled by Doctor Antommarchi at Saint Helena, immediately after death. The Elbans pay the same honour to the sham coffin as they would have paid to the real—had they been lucky enough to get it.

On each anniversary of the death of their only king and undoubted benefactor—that is to say on the 5th of May—the coffin is placed beneath a catafalque, the tapers are lit and a requiem mass is said, all the notables of the island being present.

Coffin and mask alike were the gift of the devoted Prince Anatole Demidoff, who also built and endowed the church of the Misericordia, where it used to lie. I could never get at the truth about the whereabouts of that coffin. Orestes brought back reports invariably conflicting — and circumstances, consequent upon Orestes' alleged interpretation of the landlord's words, prevented me from investigating the church myself. Orestes as interpreter had one fault. His version was always of a kind satisfactory to himself, irrespective of the purport of what was



REPLICA OF THE DEATH-MASK OF NAPOLEON, TAKEN AT ST. HELENA. PRESERVED IN THE
CHURCH OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, PORTO FERRAIO

said to him—and I know he hated walking. Orestes spoke again. “’E say,” he began, indicating the Bee, “dat dere is one oder ting, but dere is nodings inside ’im.”

Cecilia hesitated a moment, in doubt whether the “him” referred to the Bee or the thing, and whether this might not be the former’s modest method of demanding refreshment. A glance at the smiling Bee reassured her. Her curiosity was roused. “What do you mean, Orestes?” she asked cautiously. “Can we see it? It sounds quite out of the common.”

“So alluring,” said Irene. “What does he mean?”

“But dere is nodings to see,” explained Orestes, planting himself in his favourite attitude in our midst and waving his fat forefinger as of yore. “De great Napoleon—’e was in dere once, but ’e is not dere now.”

“No, of course,” said Cecilia, mystified. “What is it?”

“A prison or a bird-cage! What!” ejaculated the milord.

“It is de little church you see just close

'ere," replied Orestes, walking to the piazza-end of the verandah, and pointing to a building—separated from the Hotel of the Bee by a narrow carriage-way. "And now, ladies and sirs, I say good evening, I tink I go to cinema show," and Orestes, vandal at heart, strutted off.

It is strange that in Italy—indeed, in most Roman Catholic countries—the architects of little churches should conspire to make the exterior as hideous as they conveniently can. I allow that, in the case of cathedrals, they generally let themselves go, with immortal results, but that the small country churches should invariably suggest a cross between an early Victorian town hall and a crematorium, has always puzzled me. There is room for a platitude here about different people and their opinions, but I refuse to have any truck with it. This little church in the piazza of Porto Ferraio was just like any other little Italian church, as inordinately ugly without, as inordinately tawdry within. Yet a great ceremony had taken place within its rather dingy walls.

Briefly, this is what happened. The British frigate *Undaunted* (Captain Usher), bearing

the august exile, had, as I have stated elsewhere, at eight in the morning of the 3rd May, 1814, been sighted from the citadel of Porto Ferraio making slowly towards the Island of Elba. The exile's feelings must have been far from composed. He knew that Elba was completely unaware of his coming. The island had been blockaded for months past, and the news that the Powers of Europe had in their supreme wisdom decided to turn it into a kingdom, and instal as king the "Monster," whose effigy had, on the 21st April preceding, been burnt with all obloquy at Marciana (which place we were presently to visit), was news indeed to the populace, and there was no knowing how they would take it. As a matter of fact, the appearance of the frigate seemed like old times to the citizens of Porto Ferraio.

Bombardment was such a usual occurrence with them—all in the day's work, so to say—that they merely said in effect, "Here's another one," and took the customary precautions, thinking ruefully of the expense it would probably involve.

Wild was their joy when they realised that it was not a question of rebuilding, or even

of broken windows and missing chimney-pots (so far as I remember, I don't think they possessed any of the latter, but this would not have occurred to them, so I leave it as it is).

A boat was sent ashore, containing the foreign commissaries accompanying the Emperor, to acquaint Dalesme, the Bourbon general commanding in the Island, with the news of its promotion. The enthusiasm ashore was tremendous, though whether due in the first instance to this unexpected accession of dignity, or, as is more probable, to the relief felt by all and each at being let off a bombardment, does not clearly appear.

A deputation of Porto Ferraia's at once put off to the *Undaunted*, and were most graciously received by the Humourist, while all the rest of Porto Ferraio dashed about with packets of candles, for, like "Todgers's," Porto Ferraio "could do it when it chose! Mind that"; and the evening was to witness a general illumination on a scale so lavish as to put a severe strain on the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

At noon next day, as the clocks struck the hour, the guns boomed out from the various

little forts, and, in place of the loathed Bourbon emblem, the new flag of the kingdom of Elba—white, crossed diagonally by a broad orange stripe bearing three bees—rose slowly over Porto Ferraio, the Illustrious Wayfarer, amid the cheers of the English sailors, descended to the galley awaiting him, while every bell pealed out, and the dense crowds—indeed, “a hysterical affair” this time—chanted

“Apollo, exile du ciel,
Vient habiter Thessalie.”

All the preceding afternoon couriers had been sent post-haste through the length and breadth of the island (length twenty-seven kilometres, breadth eighteen kilometres) to summon priests, mayors, notables of every kind, to support the civil, military, and religious authorities of Porto Ferraio at the State entry of their new sovereign, whom a week before they had cursed and, in all sincerity, consigned to Gehenna.

Porto Ferraio was not then—the main portion of it, I mean—the clean, well-kept town it is to-day, nor were its people as urbane and civilised as now. Some have referred to the Elbans of that period as “savages”—in

spite of the fact that it was their custom to recite Tasso and Ariosto in public places on Sunday afternoons. It is said that those near Napoleon, when he landed, noticed the horror and repulsion in his countenance when he looked for the first time on his new capital and new subjects. But this is by the way.

Then the "authorities," the priests, mayors and notables, foreign commissaries and aides-de-camp, representatives of the *Undaunted* and everyone else who could, formed a procession, marching through the Harbour Gate, or Front Door, across the Hall, and round the Palm Court, to the little church just a stone's throw below us, as we sat in the verandah of the Bee. This is the occasion when "de great Napoleon 'e is in dere once," when the procession entered, and amid such pomp as the island could muster at short notice, a solemn *Te Deum* was sung. At the first note of the *Te Deum* the Emperor knelt and prayed at a little Prie Dieu which had been placed specially for him, while the people took up the solemn chant, singing with bowed heads.

No, Orestes was wrong. The Emperor, I



PORTO FERRAIO : PIAZZA VITTORIO EMANUELE (OR "PALM COURT"), HOTEL OF THE ELBAN BEE (WITH VERANDA) ON RIGHT

find, did not enter the church, but knelt at the door, and the people bareheaded thronged the Square. But Orestes is always wrong in details. He invents them to suit, as he thinks, the exigencies of the moment.

CHAPTER V

THE MULINI

NEXT morning we experienced our first "set-back." As was but in the nature of things, Orestes was the cause.

We found him waiting for us on the verandah. He bowed low to the ladies. "Ah, madames and misses! 'Ow you do? Ah, 'ow you charm—you bloom! De beautiful Isola d'Elba, 'e is all right for you. Dis morning you spend quiet, 'ere in Porto Ferraio. You go see de Mulini Palazzo, dat is ver' interesting."

Milord Harrison had not slept well, and was disposed to be grumpy. His daughter looked subdued—doubtless she knew the symptoms, and how, in the circumstances, to comport herself. Her duenna also was affected by the milord's condition. "Ach, ze poor Meester Harrison," she whispered to me, "he has had

varee great trouble in hees li-life. His eyes do show it to me, oh so—how you call it—clear.”

“You will find it quite easy affair,” continued Orestes cheerfully. “I ask de barber dis morning. ’E says dere is nodings difficult.”

“Ah, but we leave all that to you, Orestes,” said Cecilia sweetly; “you’re perfectly wonderful at getting into places.”

“Me—dis morning I do not come wid you,” said Orestes sadly. “I ’ave dimenticated my umbrella—forgotten ’im. I did leave my umbrella at San Martino yesterday. I care not to lose ’im. ’E was my grandmother’s. But you find all tings easy, de barber ’e tell me dat is so—and I return in time for de lunches.”

I may be pardoned for feeling nettled at this conduct. Orestes’ sole function in life at that time was to act as our interpreter and protector. Now he was going to desert us for a whole morning—subjecting us to the imminent risk of being arrested as suspects, and all for the sake of his grandmother’s umbrella. I was on the point of making a mild remonstrance, when Cecilia interposed. “Now

don't for goodness' sake go and offend the man—you're always doing something stupid—if he leaves us we're absolutely helpless."

"You find everythings all very easy," said Orestes, who had doubtless divined the purport of her words. "De barber fellow 'e tell me dat. Good-bye," and with further bows he trotted down the steps and into the Square. We looked blankly at each other. Milord Harrison growled. "You seem to allow that fellow of yours to do pretty much as he likes. What!"

We explained that Orestes was one, as it were, apart, by himself, sensitive to a fault—quick of temper—ready of action. Cecilia hinted at daggers, and the Fräulein entering into the atmosphere of the thing, expounded briefly the various systems of poisoning by which Italians, in the Cinquecento and thereabouts, were in the habit of getting rid of persons who had caused them annoyance. Milord Harrison was cowed. "Damned rum thing," he growled, as the ladies vanished to array themselves for the promenade. "Wish we'd never come to the bally place. What's the Government doing? That's what I want to know."

The Mulini Palace, of which mention has already been made in this chronicle, is not much to look at. It stands, as I have said, on the top of the grand staircase of Porto Ferraio. The story of its building is not without interest. On his arrival in Elba, the Emperor had apartments prepared for him in the Town Hall. Here was a room decorated to represent a throne-room, where on the evening of his landing, a great reception was held at which three fiddles and two basses supplied the harmony. But the Town Hall, conveniently situated across the little piazza, had its drawbacks. Noise was one, smells another, lack of privacy a third. His flattered and delighted subjects of Porto Ferraio were continually dropping in, in a friendly way, for informal little audiences. Familiarity seemed in a fair way to breed contempt. Moreover, no monarch in history had ever pitched his tent permanently in a Town Hall. Kings must have palaces, and King Napoleon cast about for a site.

A row of decrepit windmills stood at that time on the hill of Porto Ferraio, hard by the citadel. These Napoleon demolished, and the Palace of the Mulini rose in their place—so

called by way of tardy atonement to the departed windmills.

Like others of the Italian race, the Elbans deprecate undue haste. "To-morrow" is with them every bit as good as "to-day," if not better.

Consequently, when June arrived, the building operations were still far from completion, and the Emperor one day returned in thoughtful mood from his visit of inspection. He was not long, however, in making up his mind.

"Tell the architect," he said to Bertrand, "that everything must be ready by the end of next week." And so it was.

"We're just starting," broke in the voice of Cecilia. "I'm sure I don't know how we shall manage."

"I'm not coming," I declared firmly. "I shall stay here."

"Come and buck us up. What!" said the milord, with a genial grin.

"Archibald will interpret," I replied, with determination, observant of the look of dismay that crept over the poet's countenance.

"Oh! how sweet of you," cried Irene,

clutching prettily at his arm. "I'd no idea you could talk Italian. Then that makes it all quite simple. Are you sure you won't come?" (This to me.) "Hadn't we better be starting?"

I leant over the balustrade of the verandah, and watched them mounting the staircase. The day was overcast, dense clouds like mountain peaks were massed seaward—there was no wind.

Down in the piazza people lounged leisurely to and fro. There seemed to be nothing much doing in that quarter of Porto Ferraio. The long flight of steps was deserted, save for Milord Harrison and his convoy—now nearly at the top.

My thoughts returned, like, as Archibald might have put it in his sublimer moods, "homing swallows," to the Mulini Palace.

The vicissitudes of fallen monarchs give food for thought. The Palace once completed, there arose the question of furniture. Now, for the time being, His Majesty was possessed of no furniture. But the master-mind was not long at fault. It recalled the fact that there was some really excellent furniture across the water, on the mainland,

in the Palace of Piombino. This had been the property of Napoleon's sister Elise, to whom, in happier days, he had presented the principalities of Piombino and Lucca. True, since his abdication, the domains had reverted to the Austrians by a natural process, but this circumstance did not worry the Emperor. There was the furniture he wanted, and he sent a ship to fetch it. The ship fetched it without a blow being struck. The expedition "lifted" everything from window-curtains to parquet flooring, and sailed home in triumph. In lieu of payment, the officer in charge despatched to the indignant Austrian ambassador a complete list of what had been taken.

The action was not after all unreasonable ; practically all the personal effects of the illustrious exile had been held up by the Bourbon government. It is said that he landed in Elba with six dozen shirts and no pocket-handkerchiefs. But even the Piombino expedition, glorious as it was, did not entirely supply the Emperor's need. He still wanted more, and Fortune came to his rescue as usual. Never was palace furnished so inexpensively as that of the Mulini. By

good luck, it chanced that his brother-in-law Prince Borghese—the husband of Pauline whose lot it was subsequently to liven up the Court of Porto Ferraio and inaugurate the Elban Opera House—was sending some of his furniture from Genoa to Rome by sea. The ship which carried it was wrecked on the coast of Elba, in a timely storm. On hearing the glad news the Humourist hurried to the spot. He did not bother himself by any process of selection, or waste time in deciding what would look best in this room and what in that. He took the lot, remarking at the time, in a spirit of thankfulness, “This at any rate is not going out of the family,” and sent the usual list of things appropriated to his brother-in-law.

The Palace, with its furniture, had, on the Emperor’s return to Paris in 1815, been presented by him to the town of Porto Ferraio, while his books were made the nucleus of a Public Library. But the pride of the town was short-lived. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, resuming his sway over the island after Napoleon’s final overthrow, was a man, it would seem, devoid of sentiment and kindly feeling. He confiscated the house, sold the

furniture, and took most of the books himself. Therefore, in the Mulini to-day you will find fewer Napoleon relics even than in the Villa San Martino. Even the great flag of Elba shown in the Municipio, or Town Hall, is held by those best qualified to judge to be but a replica—presented by Prince Demidoff—of the original flag that floated over Porto Ferraio at noon on the historic 4th of May, 1814.

“ I ’ave not found ’im, sir.” The voice of Orestes broke into my reverie. I turned and beheld him, thumb in waistcoat as was his wont. “ I made no long affair,” said he. “ I tink all de times of de lunches. I see de gardener fellow; I say, ‘ I ’ave dimenticato mine umbrella.’ ’E was my grandmother’s. ’E say, ‘ I ’ave no grandmother; she die sixty years.’ I tell ’im ’e is asino dam fool. It is no blooming go, I do not much like dat fellow.”

“ Had he seen the umbrella ? ” I asked, not a little confused by the comprehensiveness of Orestes’ communication.

“ I tink not—but never mind. I find ’im. I tink of de lunches. Is de madames and misses returned ? ”

“ They’ve gone to the Mulini as you advised them,” I said.

“ Great pity,” sighed Orestes. “ Dey will never get inside of dem. It is ver’ difficult affair.”

“ But you said it was easy.”

“ De barber fellow say dat. ’E dam liar ! ” was the response of Orestes.

“ I tink it rain presently,” observed Orestes after a pause. “ I do not know what affair we make dis afternoon.”

The black clouds had dissolved into a veil of all-pervading grey which hid the sun. Sudden gusts of wind startled the palm trees in the Square, and sent stray scraps of paper scurrying. But there was no rain as yet.

“ What have they got for lunch ? ” I enquired.

“ Maccaroni and veal cutlets,” responded Orestes with promptitude. “ I see de padrone and ask ’im. De wine of Porto Ferraio is famoso—ver’ good. Dese people are dam late.” He produced the usual cigar from the usual pocket, cut it in two as usual, and lit one half.

“ It is no dam good dat Mulini affair,” said Orestes. “ Dey should not ’ave gone.

Dis afternoon, at fifteen o'clock, we drive to Marciana, and stay de night dere. It is ver' interesting place. I go to see de cabmen fellows. Dey shall be here at fifteen. I look to all dat."

CHAPTER VI

THE HISTORY OF MARCIANA MARINA

I WAS conscious of a sense of grievance against these Harrisons. How was it possible to realise the romantic potentialities of the island if we were for ever going about in metaphorical caravans? It had annoyed me in the first instance, when Cecilia had invited Archibald to be of our company. The new accretions bore more than a resemblance to the last straw. I scanned the staircase up and down. There was no one in sight, save only Orestes laboriously climbing up from the Square.

"I have made it all right," he cried, catching sight of me, and looking up. "It is all right, sir; fifteen o'clock."

"Go at once," I said on the spur of the moment, "and tell the man fourteen o'clock, and we shall only want one carriage."

Orestes smiled. "Dat is good plan," he chuckled. "I go and see about dat."

I betook myself to the macaroni and veal cutlets—dishes in which the Bee excelled above his fellows, and at the feast I was presently joined by Orestes.

“It is long driving affair,” he murmured, as he took his seat. “Two, tree hours—but dat do not matter.”

Still there was no sign of the exploring party. Orestes, having made a hearty meal, rose and left the dining-room. In a few minutes he reappeared.

“I ’ave packed your ver’ small bag, sir. I tell de padrone where we go. I tell ’im you great storico Inglese, Eenglish ’istorian. You write de ’istory of Marciana Marina. You only ’ear of ’im dis afternoon. Ver’ interesting place. You go dere at once. I tell ’im too, dat you make mention of ’is ’otel.”

“What about the others?” I enquired. “My wife, and Mr. Archibald and Milord Harrison?”

“I ’ave left messages for dem. I say you called away ver’ sudden to write de ’istory of Marciana Marina. ’E ’ave never been written before. Dey comes on if dey wants. ’Arrison will den pay ’is own carriages. Dat is good.”

It was fourteen o'clock, and the carriage waited in the piazza. Still no sign of the returning voyagers. We got in quickly and rattled round the Square and out by the Harbour Gate. "Dat is good ting done," said Orestes.

We felt something of the attractive sense of guilt with which schoolboys are popularly credited; pursuit, we knew, would be out of the question for an hour or two. The wayfarers would be hungry, and the maccaroni and veal cutlets would invite delay.

We followed the same road—there is no other at the start—as on the previous day, up to the point where the chasm-like track branched off to San Martino. Our way went on and up, zig-zagging cheerfully among fields a few feet below the level of the roadway, which wound along, innocent of any parapet. Orestes and I put our feet up and smoked, as the emaciated animal, called a horse, ascended the track at a foot's pace.

"Miss Irene Harrison may be, as her father claims for her, as good as a guide or a guide-book," I mused aloud, "but she doesn't seem to have done very much as yet."

“She no dam good,” purred Orestes in sublime contentment; “I ’ates all womans.”

“I was thinking,” I observed, “that she might—if what the milord said was really fact and not parental partiality——”

“’Arrison ’e is a fool,” responded Orestes. “I do not like dese cigars. Dey are not good. It is a dam country. Dere is only one London.”

“There are, as a matter of fact, two,” I explained; “if not more.”

“You pull my leg,” said Orestes. “Dat is not right between friends.”

We had entered the maquis now, leaving the cultivated land behind us, and the road, though twisting about as much as ever, had become more level. This fact the animal drawing us had perceived, and from a sense of duty broke into what might be called a trot.

The forked peak of Monte Gioro broke the western sky. Far below us, on the right, a deep blue bay revealed itself, hemmed in by precipitous rocks. In the midst of this tiny bay was a boat—drifting. Two men were purporting to row, standing up and facing each other—two squatted in the stern—one

crouched amidships. The sound of singing came up to us faintly. "They seem to sing everywhere hereabouts," said I, arising with difficulty, for the carriage jolted not a little, and peering over.

"You mistake," said Orestes peevishly—nothing annoyed him more than eulogies of his native land—"dey are only piscatori—dey fish." Orestes' tone was, as I have said, sulky. I had no wish to provoke any more references to London or to the country, so I held my peace. "Dey are all dam fools," said Orestes; "dey tink by singing dey catch de fishes, just like de Syphons in de antique time used to catch de men. I tink it great silliness. But dese Italians are so."

The road now began to zig-zag downwards—and the chariot sped the quicker.

Then I bethought me of the history of Marciana; the history that, as my stout but complacent companion asserted, had never been written yet. I do not know whether this statement was true—but it did not matter. I was now a famous English historian, who, happening by chance upon the Island of Elba, and hearing that Marciana had not yet got a history, had set out in a

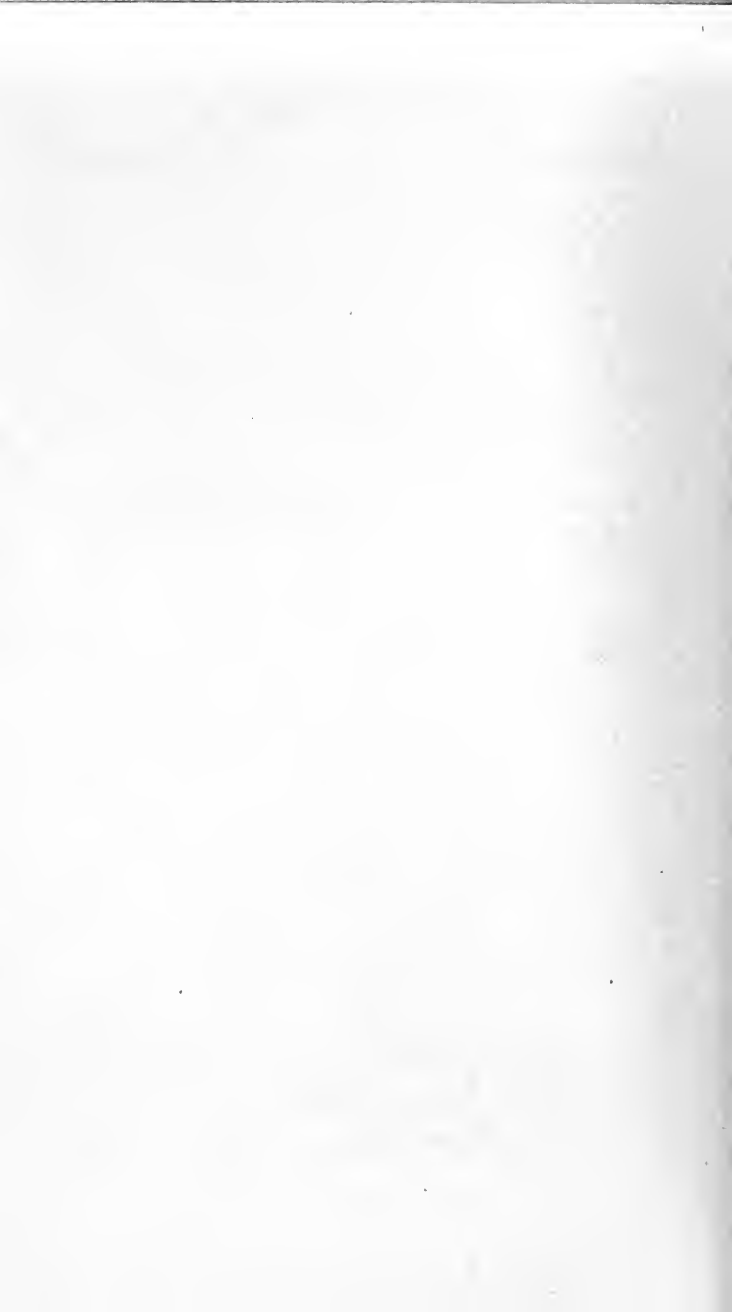
spirit of the noblest altruism to give it one.

Marciana is a volatile spot. On the 21st April, 1814, it had, as I have said, burnt Napoleon in effigy—following the custom then prevalent on the mainland. A month later it was singing *Te Deums* in his honour. Apart from these facts its history seems to have been much the same as that of any little town, village, or settlement on the Italian coast. The Barbary corsairs kept them fully employed. Flaming towns and homesteads lent a sinister zest to existence at that time. In later years—before the coming of King Napoleon and after his departure—these were still the contingencies they had to face. The place was not of sufficient importance to be bombarded like Porto Ferrajo. It had to be content with raids. Consequent upon these appears a phenomenon more or less usual to-day all along the Italian coast-line, and especially in Elba. A township by the sea-shore has its counterpart (with the addition of grey and menacing walls) up in the mountains—sometimes two or three miles away.

Marciana Marina stands on the beach, as it were ; Marciana Alta away and above it,



MARCIANA ALTA



frowning, impregnable. At the first hint of danger—of the approach of the Barbary corsairs, the inhabitants would pack up and move to the mountain stronghold, leaving the invaders to work their will down below. The coast being clear once more, they would return, repair what damage had been done, and settle down again. So it went on through the centuries.

To-day Marciana Marina, a little cluster of white houses on the shore, backed by towering mountains, their lower slopes, as we saw them, still brown with the autumn's dead foliage and faced by the magical blue of the Mediterranean, deals largely in picture post-cards—sure sign that oppression is past and that the inhabitants enjoy peace, and leisure to look about them.

We rattled down into the little town, and turning off sharp to the right, found ourselves in a narrow stone-paved street with what looked like a dead wall at the end of it, and drew up suddenly at the Restaurant of the Peace. Here the driver seemed to be fairly well known, for mine host appeared at once, hat in hand. Orestes repeated with gusto his outrageous lie concerning the “storico

Inglese," and before I could say a word, had pledged me to mention this hotel also in my mythical history, as well as the proprietors of the principal shops, such as they were.

" 'E is ver' interested," explained Orestes. " 'E tink you ver' great man."

I shivered a little, thinking of the bill to come. Orestes must have observed this, for he explained in tones of consolation, " You 'ave not fear. I tell 'im in Inghilterra all de great men is ver' little rich. I say it go opposite to Italy. 'Ere if a man 'ave so much moneys dey make 'im Cavaliere widout looking at 'im twice times. Dat is all right."

And so we thought of dinner.

More macaroni, more veal cutlets. It was already getting dark when we had finished. A starless night with the wind blowing in sudden gusts—sobbing through the alleys of the little town, lightless save only for the red glow from some cabaret, and for the tiny light always flickering before the shrine of the Virgin in the Square.

We stood at the door of the Restaurant of the Peace, looking out into the darkness. The Restaurant of the Peace consisted, to all appearance, of a dark, low-ceilinged outer

room, where, it seemed, clients drank their wine or vermouth, an inner room, somewhat lighter, where clients took their meals, and a kitchen. As for sleeping accommodation, there was to the naked eye no trace of such thing. As we puffed away in the portal, I voiced my apprehensions. "It's all very well for us," I said. "You and I have roughed it before, and can rough it again." This was not strictly true, but it sounded the right and manly thing to say.

Orestes, gratified, bowed. "Ah, yes—we rough 'im ver' well. Dat is all right."

"But the others?" I suggested.

"Dey will be all right," said Orestes. "You see, dey 'ave ver' good place 'ere. I 'ave talked to de barber and de landlord fellow. It is all ver' good. And Milord 'Arrison and dem—dey come along when it pleases. Now I go, find out more tings. You stay 'ere. De landlord 'e know you. 'E will not 'arm you." Orestes vanished into the darkness. After a moment's reflection I followed. A turn to the right at the end of the street brought me to the sea—and with the sea, the wind.

Big waves were tumbling in—for no sea

“gets up” more rapidly than the placid, tideless Mediterranean—and to the left, close at hand, the “sea front” of Marciana Marina—a half-circle of will-o’-the-wisps—blinked dimly at the coming storm.

It was on such a night as this that the Countess Walewska, most beautiful and devoted of women, after two days’ sojourn with her Imperial lover, took her leave. The ship was lying, as it were, somewhere out in the blackness before me. A puny effort of imagination, and I could almost see her riding lights, hear the tramp of the horses and make out the forms of the little cavalcade passing down to the water’s edge only to learn that embarkation was impossible. The sea ran high, the roadstead had no shelter; the ship would go round to Porto Longone on the other side of the island; there the Countess might go on board. I pictured to myself that long night ride of the lady and her child, escorted by her brother and one of the Emperor’s orderlies, in the pelting rain and shrieking wind, from one end of the island to the other (27 kilometres) by crag and ravine, exposed to the full fury of one of the worst storms known in Elba—and all

because Napoleon thought it necessary to set an example of morality to his new subjects. There is a grim irony about the whole thing. The man of steel who professed to fear nothing human or inhuman, cherished nevertheless a wholesome dread of gossip—which is both. His receptions at the Mulini Palace had been of the most exclusive sort. Those who wished to attend must be of unblemished repute. The entrée was consistently refused even to the somewhat irregular consorts whom certain of his own officers had taken to themselves to beguile the tedium of exile. In such circumstances the unexpected visit of Countess Walewska made for embarrassment. Nevertheless, the lady—by nature inclined to virtue, not to say piety—had, in the first instance, plunged into this liaison for conscience' sake. Young, beautiful above the common, already married to a blasé old gentleman of whom not much good is recorded, she yet refused all the Emperor's advances, much to the astonishment of that Miracle of Conceit whose custom it had become to throw the handkerchief at will, with stereotyped results. But her friends—perceiving in Europe's scourge a

potential liberator for their beloved Poland—pleaded with her so effectually that patriotism swamped personal scruples. These, it is true, had only held out some four days ; but this is no aspersion on the strength of the lady's principles—such prolonged stubbornness being a phenomenon hitherto strange to the assailer.

Since their first meeting in Warsaw, in the early days of 1807, it is said that “ she never ceased to walk in the shadow of his life,” true to the motto inscribed on the golden locket, hiding a strand of her hair, which she had secretly given him :

“ Quand tu cesseras de m'aimer, n'oublie pas
que je t'aime.”

And so, after waiting wearily—allowing ample time for the Empress Marie Louise to join her husband in exile—which she never had any intention of doing—Countess Walewska came upon the scene.

Nightfall of the 1st September, 1814, saw a strange ship drawing into the roadstead of Porto Ferrajo, and, making for the innermost part of the bay, cast anchor.

On the poop stood a lady, a child, another lady, and a grand gentleman (with gold

spectacles) wearing a uniform. Who lady Number Two and Gold Spectacles could be was a mystery to the simple Elbans—but they had no doubt whatever as to the identity of lady Number One and the child. These could be no other than the Empress Marie Louise and her son, the little King of Rome.

Conjecture became certainty when Grand Maréchal Bertrand arrived and gave orders that a calèche be sent for from the Imperial stables. Napoleon was then at the little hermitage high up among the clouds of Monte Giovo—the rocky peak which broods like an unseen mystery (for the summit is cloud-bound as often as not) over Marciana and the sea, while Madame Mère, a little lower down, at Marciana Alta, was, as we have seen, enjoying the loan of one of those three iron bedsteads.

The distinguished party packed themselves into the carriage and drove, as far as the road would take them, to the western portion of the island.

Porto Ferraiò was content. Again it rushed about with candles in its pockets, preparing for yet another grand illumination—which things were getting nearly as much

“everyday affairs” (as Orestes might put it) as bombardments had been in the good old times.

Whether or not this particular illumination ever took place I am unable to discover. On the following day the news appeared more certain than ever. The mariners of the ship, lately arrived, babbled artlessly as mariners will. It was clear that the lady was no other than Marie Louise. She had been taken on board at some point, not specified, on the Italian coast. While crossing the lady had referred to the child, sometimes as “my son”—sometimes as “the Emperor’s son.” The grooms, outrider, and coachman, whose duty it was to escort the strangers to the Emperor, and who had, in happier days, lived at the Tuileries, swore that they recognised the child’s clothes. The lady might be perhaps a trifle stouter than her Majesty used to be—but what would you? Trouble changes us all, some in some way, some in another, and after all they had only as yet seen her by moonlight.

Then again the saddle provided for the horse, which was to receive this mysterious lady when the carriage could go no further,

was the saddle destined for the Empress. Rumour, having transmuted itself so far satisfactorily into fact on two out of four points, now turned its attention to the others. These, it was found, presented no real difficulty. The second lady was a maid-of-honour—that was evident—and the grand gentleman with the gold spectacles could be none other than Prince Eugène of Beauharnais.

Needless to say, these complacent speculations annoyed the Emperor greatly. In this new rôle of moralist he would have preferred absolute secrecy; and it is said that his demeanour towards his fair visitor was, at first, peevish in the extreme; but the mood soon passed, and the pair spent two idyllic days in the solitudes of Monte Giovo. On the evening of the second day, propriety demanded her departure. It was a melancholy separating, charged with a sense of coming misfortune. The air was heavy, hot, stifling; the island swallowed up in a dense, leaden fog. White vapours floated round the mountain crests veiling the sun's face, while the rising wind began to hiss among the dry grass. The Emperor parted from her half-

way down the hill-side, paused for one look back, then went slowly home, while the doleful little party descended to the sea, with the long night ride before them—as yet undreamed of.

I had returned to the Restaurant of the Peace, where I sat waiting for Orestes, and trying to enjoy the tobacco of Italia—possibly the most soul-destroying task known to man.

Outside, the rain drummed down, and the wind tore through the little crooked streets with a howl. It was a good thing that Cecilia had not set out to join us that night.

“Wot I tell you?” demanded the voice of Orestes suddenly. He did not seem very wet, which surprised me. “’Ere is a dam storm. ’E blow, say de barber, two, tree days. We never get away from dis beastly isola ever any more. I did know it.”

“We’ll go to bed,” I said firmly. “Where is it?”

The padrone must have been lurking near, in anticipation.

He appeared suddenly, wrapt in a cloak, and carrying a stable lantern, a sign which gave but little encouragement. “We follow

'im," said Orestes, and we passed out into the night. One turn to the right—one to the left, whereat we got the full force of rain and wind with a suddenness that startled us, and drove us back. There did not seem much chance of sleep that night, with the sea and the waves roaring. Up a little flight of steps, crowned by a dingy door, we paused. Unpromising this—but we could not help ourselves. The door opening disclosed a little flat—the hotel section of the Restaurant of the Peace. The rooms were of decent size, airy, and, like those of the Elban Bee, scrupulously clean. Truly we might have done worse.

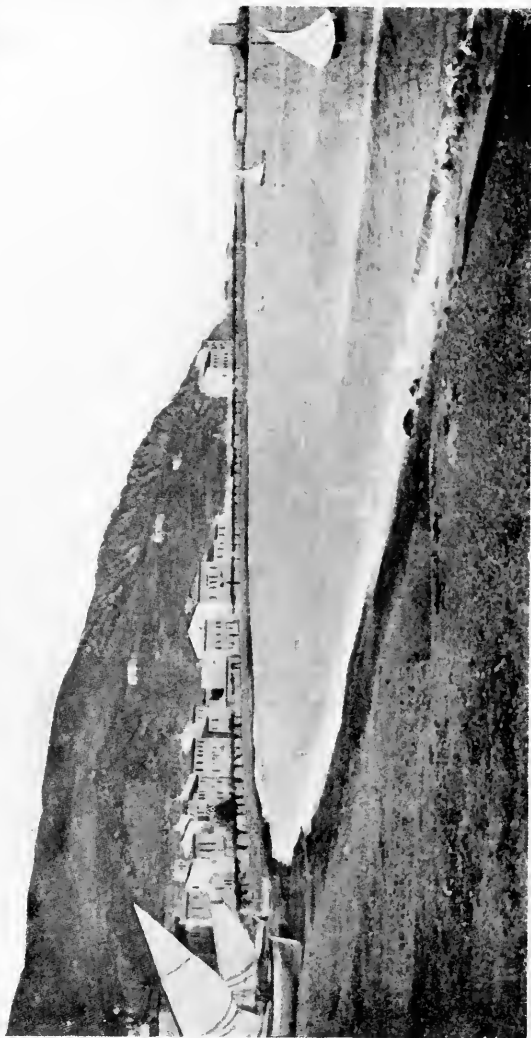
"To-morrow," said Orestes, "perhaps we see de 'Ermitage on de mountain. I 'ear all about 'im from de barber. Good night, sir!"

CHAPTER VII

THE HERMITAGE

THE storm passed with the night, and the morning broke clear and sunny. I was awakened early. Certain people seemed to be taking an unreasonable delight in bawling unintelligible nonsense through the length and breadth—neither very portentous—of the street that lay beneath my window. Yet I had cause to rise up and bless those persons, though to this day I have but the haziest notion as to what the noise was about. In the brilliant morning sun, the little half-circle of houses fringing the beach, and the rest of the dingy messuages and tenements which composed the tiny town, peered with the freshness and glow of a child who has had his face washed.

Behind the chain of mountain peaks—the backbone, as it were, of the island—their



MARCIANA MARINA

warm brown slopes thick with chestnut trees merging into brushwood, and again into rock—were dappled with sun and shadow. No longer grim and sinister, as yesterday, half hidden in cloud and mist—they shot up clear into a sky of deepest blue. I could make out the sister township of Marciana Alta far up the mountain side. Nearer, at a similar altitude, sprawled another village of high grey walls and inaccessible aspect. This, explained Orestes, was Poggio. “A very interesting place, sir,” he said. “I know not what did ’appen dere, but it was ver’ interesting ting. I will ask some of dese fellows. Dey will know all about ’im.”

We were standing by the shore, watching the incoming waves, still somewhat perturbed from the previous night. Small fishing-boats were drawn up on the beach, boats like the one we had seen far below us on our drive, with its occupants apparently trying the methods of the sirens on such fish as might be handy.

These craft had no sterns to speak of—and their interiors smelt of their calling. I enquired of Orestes as to the nature of the fish they were intended to catch.

"I do not know nodings," he said. He looked bored rather than not. It was practically impossible to get any information out of Orestes unless he was in the mood, and then he generally invented to suit one's tastes and predilections.

"Tunny," I suggested. "In Napoleon's time there were large tunny fisheries on the coast of Elba, bringing in an annual income of thirty thousand francs."

"Den," replied Orestes, fidgeting, "I expect dey get just de same now. It is no large moneys, and dey is all lazy fellows 'ere."

"Thirty thousand francs," I repeated impressively. "Twelve hundred a year."

"I tink we make an excursion affair to Poggio dis morning," he replied unmoved. "We will start at ten hours. If de oders arrive, we leave word again wid de padrone."

It seemed a little bit harsh to leave Cecilia in the lurch like this a second time, but, as Orestes lucidly pointed out, "our days is few, sir, and we must not spare to waste one."

Also, she was doubtless enjoying herself much more than would have been the case if I had not escaped.

It is, I suppose, one of the symptoms of

devotion in a wife that she should call her husband names at decent intervals. Cecilia, when ruffled, was no exception to this rule, and the element of uncertainty attaching to those intervals put an undue strain upon the mind. A period of rest would be good for both of us. Also, absence makes the heart grow fonder. There were a host of reasons proving that I had taken the right and proper and only course. Then, if on our return the party had still not arrived, why, Orestes and I could go off again, leaving another message. It would be a species of hide-and-seek, lending zest to our pilgrimage.

“ This Poggio has nothing to do with little lambs, like the other one ? ” I remarked tentatively, as our carriage, the level road left behind, crawled up a steep zig-zag track among the chestnut trees.

“ No, sir. Dis is not de same place as dat oder.”

This was true—one of those shining, helpful truths in the enunciating of which Orestes excelled. They left no chance for the sceptic. All men must needs here think as one—humanity be knit together in one glorious bond of brotherhood.

“Then if Poggio does mean Pity—whom are we to pity now?”

“I tink,” said Orestes complacently, drawing forth the inevitable cigar, “we do pity dose silly fellows dat try and walk, climb up dis dam road. Look, sir. Dere is Poggio,” pointing upward to where the grey walls towered, as it seemed, almost over our heads. “Ah! ’oo would walk such a road? But it is ver’ interesting place, all de same.”

“Before Napoleon came, people had to walk on much worse roads.”

“No, sir, I tink dey rode on mules—like dis woman ’oo come down.”

The peasant woman in question, perched on a mule which bore, besides, a load sufficient for a small waggon, eyed us with curiosity. Orestes took off his hat with a greeting, to which she responded at some length, and passed on.

“It take an hour to climb up from de bottom,” said Orestes. “Soon we are dere. We come down ver’ quick. She say it is ver’ interesting place.”

I was convinced that she had said nothing of the sort, but could not prove it.

We turned off from the zig-zag and passed

through an iron gate up a drive that rapidly reached a space of level ground. Then we stopped.

“ ’Ere we get out,” announced Orestes.

We seemed to be in somebody’s garden. The roadway continued, flanked, to the best of my recollection, with stone vases and the paraphernalia of Italian gardens—until it ended a few yards away, opposite a long two-storeyed building, of modern construction.

“ Dis way,” said Orestes, and he and the cabman led the way up a short flight of steps to an extensive plateau whereon stood a large villa (much like other villas as to its appearance), oblong in shape, surrounded by a well-kept garden in which paths and gravelled spaces figured largely. The gardener, who had joined the party, went ahead and opened a small door at the end of the building.

“ But this is private property,” I protested. “ We’re not going in there.”

“ ’E is empty,” explained Orestes simply.

“ That makes no difference,” I replied.

“ De cabman fellow—dis one—” said Orestes, “ ’e know de gardener.”

“ That’s got nothing whatever to do with it. We have no business here, and the gar-

dener has no business to let us into his master's house without permission."

"I 'ave got de permission affair," said Orestes calmly. "I get 'im at de same time as de oder."

I gasped; truly Orestes was a wise and far-seeing cicerone, though a trifle secretive at times.

It was a comfortable villa—up-to-date in every respect. It had a bath-room and a modern kitchen range, and the view from its front windows, and the broad balustraded terrace which topped the precipice a thousand feet above the sea, was as superb as the mind of man can well conceive.

Perched up here, with the mountains on three sides of him, and the sea on the fourth, a man might, if he pleased, feel himself severed outright from the twentieth century—except for the reminders of the bath-room and the kitchen range. He might people the ravines and the chestnut woods with fauns and satyrs, or Phyllises and Corydons; brigands of mediæval cut-throatness, or fugitives driven into hiding by the raids of the Barbary pirates.

I speculated much as to what might be the

associations that made of Poggio such an "interesting place."

Napoleon could hardly have inhabited the villa. It must certainly have been built since his time. In all that I had read, I had come across no mention of any actual personal visit to Poggio.

He must, from Marciana Alta, have gazed on substantially the same view which feasted our eyes that day. There was something in that—but not much. If we are going to pause and meditate upon the things that eminent persons long dead might have seen had they been there, we shall, unless we stay rigidly indoors, need lives five times the length of three score years and ten, with uninterrupted leisure to boot.

No—I decided it must be something more than that. Now, the proper demeanour for the pilgrim visiting scenes of historical interest is a difficult one to make sure of. It has always puzzled me. It is bad enough for a private individual whose fame, if any, is wont to blush unseen ; but the mendacity of Orestes had given me a sort of public glamour. I had already caught the words "storico Inglese" and "famoso—molto famoso," also

the words "Inghilterra" and "continente," signifying, as I suppose, that my glory did not confine itself to my native land. Already the gardener (the cabman fellow of course had known about it for hours) was regarding me with respect.

I leant upon my stick, assuming, as well as I could, an attitude of profound thought. Orestes took what he thought was the hint. He touched the gardener, who had begun to make some observation to his friend the cabman, on the shoulder, and pointed to me.

All three stood, and watched respectfully. Orestes, who loves to overdo things if he can, touched his forehead, and looked at his companions as though he would bid them watch the great brain at work. The same gesture might well have been taken as a hint that the great brain had gone wrong, but Orestes knew his men.

However, I could not very well stay like that all day. After a time it would fail to convince. Of that I was sure. Neither could I ask any searching questions as to the associations of the house with Napoleon, because I was pretty certain there were none, and my reputation would be gone.

I did the one thing left to me. I took out my note-book, looked thoughtfully out of the window and wrote. On occasions like this—as I have found—it is the most difficult thing in the world to know what to write, and time is, as the lawyers say, of “the essence of the contract.” I wrote down the alphabet rapidly and shut the book. “Let’s get out of this,” I said to Orestes. “Be quick about it.”

“You will see the laundry, sir—and de stable.”

“No, I won’t,” I replied brusquely.

“Ver’ good, sir.” Orestes sighed.

“Now I show you oder tings. All ver’ interesting.”

The little procession formed again and moved leisurely to the door by which it had entered. It crossed the garden and, ascending another little flight of stone steps, passed through a small iron gate on to a stone-flagged pathway which rose steeply before us, winding between high grey walls. A more cut-throat looking spot I never wish to see. “Ver’ interesting tings” may well have happened there o’ moonless nights. Not that the Elbans, to do them justice, have ever shown great desire for such doings. Stabbings

and such little contretemps are common enough in Italy to-day among those who go out of their way to provoke them. The knife is, I suppose, the traditional method of persuasion among the unargumentative classes in Italy. They are, in the words of the divine Sairey, "born so, and will please themselves," but the hand of the Law is heavy and swift to fall. There was, however, one occasion in the history of Elba when its inhabitants did, as one may say, "let themselves go," but that was a political or rather a national "affair," and, in the circumstances, comprehensible. It all arose out of that unfortunate habit contracted by other communities of bombarding Porto Ferraio when they had nothing else to do. Such a process continued would naturally, in time, affect the nerves of the citizens and, incidentally, of the island.

In 1799, France found time among her many other engagements to occupy Porto Ferraio. I cannot say for certain whether such occupation was or was not preceded by the usual bombardment, but it is reasonably safe to suppose that it was.

In all externals the Elbans appeared sub-

missive, philosophical to the extent of bowing to the various successive decrees of Fate as to what should become of them. Civic life in Porto Ferraio went on its way as usual. Doubtless occupiers (they little dreamt of the time when such a term would be applied to harmless ratepayers who had never bombarded a thing) and occupied, met in wine-shops, in the piazza, on the Staircase, and in "social circles" on terms of apparent cordiality. But a spiritually observant wayfarer might have noticed marks on the lintels of certain houses—houses where the French were lodged—as a guide to the Destroying Angel, not that he might pass them by, but that he might not fail to enter at the appointed signal—and this not only in Porto Ferraio but throughout the island of Elba.

The massacre was simultaneous everywhere. It has been termed justly enough the "New Sicilian Vespers." The unfortunate Frenchmen—absolutely unprepared—had no chance. The very convicts were let loose from the prisons of Porto Longone and Porto Ferraio to give chase to the unfortunates who were fortunate enough to survive. Like wild beasts they were tracked through the thick

maquis—over rocks and ravines. Even those same chasms that an hour ago I had been peopling with Fauns and Corydons, Phyllises and Satyrs, might have harboured some of these terror-stricken wretches, fleeing from the Destroying Angel of Elba. The folk of Capo-Liveri—the grey brigand hill-town at the other end of the island, from time immemorial a City of Refuge for evil-doers, forming a community by themselves, unamenable to any law—really lived up to their vile reputation. To such French fugitives as passed by they offered, with all kindly words and friendly gestures, the shelter of their mountain stronghold—protection from the swarms of blood-hungry Elbans hot-foot on the trail. To make things more plausible they pointed out the undoubted fact that for centuries this same town of Capo-Liveri had offered and given sanctuary to hunted men.

The defenceless refugees were persuaded. Once within the walls, the massacre began and ended. The bodies were carefully cut in pieces, and in and out of the carnage thus strewn on the ground, strutted the Capo-Liverans supremely self-satisfied. It is strange that they should have thought fit to

make common cause with the honest men of Elba, stranger still that the honest men of Elba should have countenanced it—but at such times the wider issues are forgotten.

But the vengeance of France was swift—as swift as circumstances would permit. In 1801 Porto Ferraio was blockaded. In 1802 it received yet another bombardment, and in the same year the Treaty of Amiens gave the island with due form and ceremony to France.

“Hullo! Here you are! What!”

The commanding form of Milord Harrison stood beside me. Absorbed in reflection, I stared at him. I really thought I had given him the slip, but I could not have understood the milord properly. Some keener brain than mine was necessary, and Orestes, who might have done something, had disappeared up the cut-throat passage—with the cabman and the gardener. Archibald and the ladies were already ascending the steps from the villa’s garden, and reproachful cries reached me.

“You were such a devil of a time,” I said. “By the way, what did you make of the Mulini? Jolly interesting, I should think.”

The milord grunted after his kind, and the

others joined us. To anticipate reproaches I remarked, "Well, I'm glad you were able to catch us up." It sounded weak when I had said it, but I could think of nothing better at the moment.

"But why—why on earth did you scuttle off like that?" demanded Cecilia, with the suspicion of a tear, "leaving us all—all anyhow."

"There was the history to write," I replied firmly.

"What history?"

"That of the picturesque little town you've just left. Marciana Marina."

"But why?"

"They were in urgent need of it. Orestes said it hadn't been written yet."

"You are so silly sometimes," said Cecilia plaintively. "Here have we been chasing you for ever so long. We couldn't start last night because of the storm, and now you put us off with that silly excuse."

"I vote we go and find that fellow of yours," put in the milord, I think in the kindly spirit of preventing, if possible, what he thought might be unpleasantness. But he did not really know Cecilia.

"He has a cabman and a gardener with him," I murmured.

"Damn the fellow! He does nothing but go about with cabmen and gardeners."

"And barbers," I said. "It's a custom of the country—and, after all, he's a native."

"A damned silly custom," retorted Colonel Harrison.

"It is," I agreed. "Very, very foolish."

We proceeded up Cut-throat Lane. Rounding a corner, we perceived that the grey walls gave way to little grey houses with squalid low-pitched doorways. Through a tiny aperture—what it was intended for I do not know—somewhere about the level of our feet, we peered dizzily upon rocks and tree-tops.

We entered the Square, which was not particularly square in shape owing to a certain irregularity of design. Houses—dirty enough to the eye—were on three sides. The fourth was a low parapet of stone over which we saw again that same glorious panorama of sea and mountain. I felt it would be pleasant to sit there meditating for hours, and tried hard to think thoughts worthy of the view.

"What are all these fellows hanging round for?" enquired the milord sharply.

“ Well, it’s their own place,” I explained, looking round and observing for the first time a group of leading citizens, whose numbers seemed constantly on the increase.

“ It’s only in Italy—and perhaps in France—that you will find people of that station in life admiring a view like this.”

“ That is so,” put in Archibald. “ They have—even the poorest—a keen sense of the beautiful. It ought to make us Northerners a bit ashamed of ourselves.”

“ A keen sense of the beautiful,” echoed Cecilia.

“ It’s us they’re looking at, I do believe,” cried Irene in high delight. She turned to Archibald. “ You do pay such delicious compliments. So funny and roundabout, one hardly knows what to make of them at first.”

Archibald looked embarrassed. “ I didn’t mean it quite that way,” he explained.

“ Yes, you did,” retorted Irene. “ I think it’s perfectly ducky of you.”

“ But they really are looking at us,” exclaimed Cecilia, drawing closer to me. “ What dreadfully fierce faces they’ve got. Do they ever shave, I wonder? What do they want? ”

“These fellows are all born artists,” said Archibald in explanation.

“And,” I added, “if Miss Harrison’s conjecture is correct, they are paying us a high compliment. It would be rather ungracious to complain of the state of their chins, when they are hailing us—us, as types of British beauty. You wouldn’t find artists in England doing that kind of thing.”

“It’s no use to try to laugh it off,” whispered Colonel Harrison, taking me aside. “I know what you mean, and I honour you for it. Mustn’t alarm the ladies, of course. But you and I must look things bang in the face, old man. How are we going to get ’em away?—the ladies, I mean. I had a damned good lesson in Northern Nigeria—what? Those blackguards mean mischief.”

I am of a nervous disposition, and began to feel genuinely alarmed. Of course, the conditions of Northern Nigeria could hardly be held applicable to Elba. I still realised that. But Milord Harrison was a man of the world—of experience with out-of-the-way peoples, and the Elbans, with all their kindness and hospitality, are a little bit off the beaten track. Corsica also is hard by. We were

perfectly helpless—unless, of course, Archibald could really speak Italian, and my word to that effect were a true one spoken in jest. And as yet circumstances had prevented me from getting any hint—beyond a grunt—as to how they had fared at the Mulini under his guidance.

In the depth of my despair I noticed a familiar form, and two others somewhat less familiar, flitting about among the throng.

“Orestes !” I shouted, and Orestes extricated himself from the rest and came forward. He did not wait for me to speak further. “Dese peoples,” he said, “’ave come together to view the great English ’istorian ’oo, I tell dem, is going to put all deir names in de large book ’e write. It will be ver’ interesting. Dey would like, dey say, a drop of wine.”

“Why ?” I enquired, taken aback.

“Dey say dey tirsty, sir.”

“I’m very sorry—but they surely know where they can go and get it.”

“Tank you, sir,” and Orestes was making off. Then I realised that he had mistaken the purport of my remarks, perhaps wilfully, and was going to tell the simple folk that the great historian had commanded that the

fountains should run wine in honour of his visit. Still I remembered the Colonel's fears. I had no wish to infuriate the crowd.

"Are they all thirsty?" I enquired.
"Every one of them?"

"Every one, sir," said Orestes convincingly.

I gripped the Colonel by the arm, and signalled to the others to follow. We left by the way we had come, but in haste. At the gateway of the villa we waited—waited long for Orestes and his two comrades. At last they came.

"I give dem just a few francs to drink your 'ealth, sir. Dese are ver' good people. Dey ver' pleased at deir names being in your great book."

"But there isn't any great book," explained Cecilia. "They don't understand."

"I know dat," said Orestes triumphantly, "but I do not tell dese fellows. Now we go 'ome."

This was a bit too much even for Orestes, who was allowed considerable licence in most things. "Nonsense," I said sternly; "I came to see the hermitage where Napoleon stayed."

“ I ver’ sorry ; I do not tink you see ’im,” was the reply.

“ Why ? ” we cried with one voice.

“ ’E is a dam long way up—it is all walking affair—ver’ steep—no dam good. No, we do not see de ’ermitage. It is a pity, but what can we ? I am old, sir, and ’eavy.”

“ Then,” said I, “ what in thunder did you bring me up here for ? It was the hermitage I wanted to see, and so did my wife and all of us.”

“ Dis ver’ interesting place,” replied Orestes doubtfully, “ but ’e is not ’isterical. Dere is in ’im no ’isterical monuments—so de gardener fellow say.”

“ What else is there to see ? ” enquired Archibald. “ There must be something, or why should you have lugged us up this damnable mountain ? ”

“ Dere is nodings else,” responded Orestes, and there was a note of sadness in his voice. “ Nodings at all. De cabman fellow ’e tell me. All dere is, you ’ave seen—dat beautiful villa dere.”

“ But that’s got nothing to do with Napoleon—he was never there—never set eyes on it,” I said, exasperated.

The cabman departed to see if the chariot was still at hand, and the gardener accompanied him to bid us God-speed, and to receive, if Fate were kind, an honorarium.

“I am a funny fellow,” replied Orestes unabashed, as we moved off in the wake of the cabman. “I know all dat. Dat beautiful villa—’e is I tink de only dam ting in de ’ole dam island dat ’as nodings to do wid de great Napoleon. Dat is ver’ interesting. I tink you like to see ’im.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE COURT

BACK at the sign of the "Elban Bee," in Porto Ferraio, and the rain coming down (it is strange how we insist on truisms—relying, as it were, still upon the remote possibility that rain may one of these days go up instead, for a change)—coming down, I repeat, in sheets. There was no driving affair for us that day. We had seen a draggled steamer putting out for Piombino, at a quarter to thirteen, with a modest cargo of outspread, dripping umbrellas.

The far side of the bay was hidden in driving mist. Yet another "histerical" association. The Imperial Exile from the windows of the Mulini must, more than once, have observed such weather and such a scene minus the steamer. This was an interesting reflection. My thoughts turned again to the Mulini, as I sat in a heavy coat

on the Bee's verandah and watched the drip-drip of the rain, and the shiny umbrellas flitting about the Square.

The others could tell me what it was like inside nowadays. For some reason or other—a succession of chance interruptions—I had not yet been able to learn of the success or otherwise of their expedition. At the moment I had no idea where they had got to, for they seemed—and I was thankful enough for it—to have made up their minds to leave me (and Orestes) out of all excursions, except such as may be termed official. And let me here digress for a moment to utter a solemn word of warning to those among my readers who may be contemplating such a pilgrimage as mine. Go alone—or not at all, and take an interpreter with you. It sounds contradictory—but truth oft-times reposes in contradiction, as in a well. A cloud of witnesses like the Harrisons and Archibald are frankly a nuisance. I exclude Cecilia from that indictment, merely because she insisted on coming, and so it had to be done. “I should never sleep a little wink, dear,” she had said, “thinking of you all alone among those desperate sort of people” (devotion proved

too much for grammar); “you know I hate the bother of travelling—I’d far rather stick at home and look after Baby—but a wife’s place is at her husband’s side, isn’t it, dear?” The others—Archibald, Irene, Fräulein Braun, and the milord—cannot weary my readers more than they weary me. But truth is, or should be, of the essence of history—and I welcomed the occasions when this self-imposed chorus saw fit to leave me in peace.

Elba still, I fancy, looks back regretfully to its one year of existence as a kingdom. All the externals of royal State were there, in miniature. King, Court, Administration, Army, Navy—everything that pertains to the glory of a real thorough-going kingdom.

Bertrand, the faithful, was Palace Marshal and civil Governor of the island; in which latter capacity he controlled the departments of Intendant-General, Tribunal of Commerce, Director of Domains, Commission of the Peace, Courts of First Instance, of Appeal and of Cassation, and Council of State. For this his royal master proposed to pay him 20,000 francs annually.

General Drouot had the comparatively

simple job of military Governor, for 12,000 francs.

For Chancellor of the Exchequer there was Peyrusse—whom the Emperor called Peyrousse—a jovial Southerner whom nothing could abash. He it was who saw Moscow in flames, and on the following day expressed his surprise at not being able to find, among the smoking ruins, a washerwoman to do his shirts for him. He too had to be content with 12,000 francs. The only serious trouble he had ever experienced in his life is said to have been the crossing from Fréjus to Elba. He had never been to sea before, says M. Paul Gruyer, and the frigate rolled not a little.

So much for the Cabinet. The Court was extensive, considering the size of its quarters—and peculiar. Arrighi, the Vicar-General, who, it will be remembered, sang the *Te Deum* in honour of Elba's King on the famous 4th May, was Court Almoner. He was a Corsican—and seeing the turn events had taken—did not propose to let anyone forget it. He strutted about the place in high glee, lording it over all and everything, calling the Monarch his “cusino carnale”—but

it is recorded that Napoleon had to entreat him to keep quiet in church.

There were four chamberlains—Elbans—of whom it is said that their principal difficulty in tackling the niceties of Court etiquette lay in their gloves. They had never worn such things before.

These were Lupi, the doctor, commander of the Elban National Guard and Director of Woods and Forests. (In this last capacity his duties must have been singularly light. There was in the island, in his time, an even greater scarcity of Woods and Forests than exists to-day.) Traditi, Mayor of Porto Ferraio; Signor Vantini, the leader of local art and culture; and the Mayor of Rio Montagna, rogue and ex-brigand, who had borne his part, with satisfaction to himself, in the “New Sicilian Vespers.” For each of these 1200 francs a year was deemed sufficient, and doubtless the glory of their exalted functions went for something.

There were two Secretaries—one for the Emperor and one for Bertrand—while a couple of sergeants were made Prefects of the Palace. Of these, one was a gendarme, “dressed like an officer, red, and fat but harm-

less"—the other an honest soldier, who in Elba, for the first time, was called upon "to expose himself to the rigours of the drawing-room." The Commandant of Artillery—a Neapolitan—was noted for his "crass stupidity," while Paoli, the Corsican doctor, had won renown for his "platitudes." It is said (though this is hardly a platitude) that when the Emperor had occasion to ask him the time, he would reply with all deference, "Whatever time your Majesty pleases."

Such—with the addition of a chemist who helped the good Paoli to prepare his medicines, for an annual remuneration of 7800 francs—was the Court.

The Household was more numerous. A butler, a *chef de cuisine*, a roaster, a kitchen help, a stoker, a kitchen boy, a pantry help, a pantry boy, a cellarman, a silver cleaner, an assistant silver cleaner, a baker, two valets, two outriders, a Mameluke, a wardrobe boy (whatever he may have been), eight footmen, an upholsterer, two scrubbers, three labourers, a lamplighter, and a porter.

It was Napoleon's original idea that the Court should all reside at the Mulini Palace

under his Imperial Eye—but the Court kicked, and it was just as well, for they could not possibly have squeezed in.

In addition I must mention a Director of Gardens—with one gardener under him; and a Director of Music, whose duty it was to curb the angry passions of one pianist and two lady singers, for which controllers and controlled had to put up with the princely salary of 600 francs between them.

The army of the King of Elba totalled 1600 men. As many of the Bourbon garrison as consented to remain were enrolled in a first battalion of 400 “guns,” the remainder consisting of those Corsicans who had flocked to Elba, when the news of the establishment of the Comic Opera Kingdom reached them, and recruits from Piedmont and Tuscany. This precious crowd was known alternatively as “The Corsican Battalion,” or “The Chasseurs of Napoleon.” There was one captain to every forty men, one lieutenant to every thirty, a sub-lieutenant to every twenty, and a sergeant-major to every ten. Everybody wanted to command everybody else, and to obey no one. So much for the “400 guns.” It is recorded in connection

with this higgledy-piggledy battalion, that Commandant Tavelly, an old Corsican soldier, was once addressed as "Colonel" by the Emperor, in a moment of absent-mindedness. He lost no time in buying the epaulettes suitable for that rank and sticking them on his shoulders. Tavelly was certainly a prompt old person, and the Emperor, tickled by his zeal, recognised this self-promotion, and adorned it with an extra eighty francs monthly.

Then there was the Elban National Guard—whose principal delight it was to don uniforms on Sundays and walk about with their families. This does not seem to have been a particularly serviceable force, and, so far as I can discover, it was never put to the test. One of its members, a shoemaker, contrived to steal 20,000 francs of the Emperor's personal cash, on its arrival in the island, and had it not been for the extreme piety of the delinquent, it is more than possible that the theft would never have been brought home to him. So delighted was he at this haul, that—ascribing it to the direct interposition of Heaven—he ordered and paid for an inordinate number of Masses, by way of

thanks to the Blessed Virgin for his great good fortune. This gave the clue.

The remainder—or rather the nucleus—of the Elban host was composed of 800 veterans of the Guard—from Fontainebleau, under the command of Cambronne.

Down there in the dripping piazza, a hundred years ago, Napoleon stepped forward to embrace his faithful soldier, who at the head of his men had marched up through the Harbour Gate, with drums beating. In the piazza they formed a square and presented their eagles. The Emperor embraced most of them, and made them a stirring speech, at which they “wept copiously into their moustaches.” To their commander he said, “Cambronne, I have had some bad moments waiting for you, but now we are together, and all is forgotten.”

Cambronne, the bluff and blunt—military Governor of Porto Ferraio—was to be the Emperor’s right-hand man during those anxious days which preceded the ringing down of the curtain on the Kingdom of Elba. His life had not been free from vicissitudes. He had, in 1793, been condemned to the guillotine for having inadvertently slept in a

room with fleurs-de-lis and portraits of Louis XVI on the wall-paper. For this hideous crime he was charged with "incivisme"—or lack of those qualities which go to make an honest "citizen." Left for dead at Waterloo, stripped by the pillagers, "naked," as he used to say, "as a little St. John," he was acquitted at the subsequent court-martial, on the ground that he had been fighting in the service of a foreign sovereign—i.e. the King of Elba—not as a rebel against Louis XVIII. General Drouot, by the way, escaped through the same loop-hole.

It was left for Bertrand to follow his Emperor to St. Helena, and with him went Madame Bertrand, Marchand the valet, and the Mameluke Ali.

I can never understand precisely why the Humourist always had this same Mameluke Ali in attendance; made a point of it, in fact. Possibly because he was a humourist and Ali no more a Mameluke than himself, but, as is well established, an honest Frenchman whose name was St. Denis, and whose native place Marseilles. What it must have cost this good man to prance about continually in Eastern attire and gabble tongues

unknown even to himself for the sake of versimilitude we shall never know. But he was a faithful fellow, and he did it like a man.

Looking out, from the Bee's verandah, upon the grey mist-shrouded town, the painted house-fronts, like monster dolls' houses, garishly unconvincing when there is light, dismal as the tomb when there is none, the few shiny umbrellas, plodding across the Square, or up the staircase, slowly, like animated but weary mushrooms, it was not easy to reconstruct the vivacious scenes which, in Porto Ferraio, marked the inception of the Elban kingdom.

On the day of Napoleon's landing, Arrighi, the bibulous Vicar-General, had issued a magniloquent Proclamation to all the Exile's loyal subjects, to the effect that the Island of Elba, already justly renowned for its natural products, was destined to become immortal in the history of the nations, in that it had received into its bosom the Lord's Anointed. "Let fathers repeat it to their children," he said. "Ye multitudes, come gather together from every quarter of the world, and gaze upon a Hero!"

And the multitudes did gather together

with a vengeance, not so much to gaze upon the Hero, as to get something out of him.

Itinerant bands, from the mainland, played judicious selections beneath his windows—often till the small hours of the morning. The Emperor was at last compelled to send out a very mild message to the effect that he was not fond of music. The bands blared away just the same, however, and had to be forcibly removed by gendarmes.

The poor man could not put his nose outside his front door without being bombarded with petitions. “Sire,” said one, an army doctor from Porto Longone, “precisely the same thing has happened to me as to you—I have been defrauded.” “Well,” said the Emperor, “if there is somebody besides myself at this game, it doesn’t follow that he’s going to starve.” The poorer folk—and especially their children—flocked around him with little bouquets of wild flowers, and demanded large sums in payment. Bogus monks bobbed about in the road—when he went his drives abroad—waving crosses and sacred emblems, and if, in excess of irritation, he pretended not to notice them, they would roll themselves in the dust—under the very hoofs of his

horses. Sculptors arrived from Carrara, with marble busts of the Emperor and Empress, and besieged the palace doors at all hours. To a man trying to enjoy a quiet meal this must have been rather annoying. Some he bought. The majority he didn't buy. The lucky ones generally finished by parting with the busts at 300 francs the pair, pedestal and all complete. The others were compelled to tuck their masterpieces under their arms and bewail their travelling expenses.

He had a special road made, out through the Porta della Terra, whereby he could escape these importunities and, in his carriage, gain the open country without detection.

Others came too—adventurers seeking service in the strange little kingdom—enemies in disguise—sham soldiers—"demoiselles et dames"—and, as M. Gruyer puts it, "countesses, more or less authentic." There were also spies, in swarms, to report to the Powers generally, and to Austria in particular, on the doings of their erstwhile conqueror. Yet even then, in the midst of the annoyance and humiliation consequent upon the founding of this absurd kingdom by the man who had laid Europe waste with fire and sword—that

man was plotting and planning. Nothing he did was without an object—as Colonel Campbell was to know in due time.

When he ordered his veterans of the Guard to make elaborate little gardens in front of their barracks, and trot about with wheelbarrows and trowels, in the sight of all men, he had his reasons. Truly a great man !

“ It is clearing up, sir,” proclaimed the voice of Orestes behind me. I had not noticed his coming, and he startled me.

“ Perhaps we make an affair dis afternoon.”

“ Where are the others ? ” I asked.

“ ‘Avin’ deir lunches, sir.”

With an imprecation I arose and went in to join them.

CHAPTER IX

THE BARBARY CORSAIR

PORTO LONGONE—in the southeastern portion of the island—is now principally renowned as a convict station. In and before the days of the Elban kingdom it was a military post pure and simple, with the prison as a species of by-product. The huge castle on the hill behind the town—now peopled with convicts (800, more or less), Camorristi, assassins, and, as Orestes observed, “very dangerous chaps”—was built during the Spanish occupation of the island somewhere between the years 1605 and 1619.

That afternoon it did not look inviting as, after we had crossed the island's backbone, it lay below us, indistinct in the mist—but then, nothing looked inviting. I think we should all have preferred to stay at home in the kindly shelter of the Bee's verandah.

Orestes, however, thought otherwise. For the last twenty-four hours I had noticed an air of preoccupation about him, and had put it down to the belated workings of conscience. When, therefore, he appeared after lunch and informed us that the cabs were waiting I was surprised and also gratified. Orestes was beginning to justify his presence among us.

"It's raining like the devil," sniffed the milord. "Absurd going anywhere on a day like this. What!"

"And then," said Cecilia, "it isn't fair on the places. They do look so horrid when it's raining, and that gives us all such a bad impression and makes us so frightfully unjust."

"I want to have only pleasant memories of the dear little island when I go home," said Irene wistfully. "And surely it's rather late to start on a long day excursion."

"Ach!" said Miss Braun, already caparisoned, joining the group. "Nature in a-a-ll 'er—'ow you say—mo-o-o-ods is a beautiful sicht. We 'ave seen de sunshine—now we see de sto-orm. It is beau-utiful."

"I think," said Archibald, "the decision must lie with the ladies. It'll be devilish wet."

“De cabs is 'ere,” remarked Orestes, with an air of finality. He had planted himself in the doorway in his favourite attitude. “We make driving affair. It is ver' important, and Porto Longone ver' interestin' place. Many tings 'appen dere. We make 'aste.”

The mist had lifted a little, and one could make out dimly, across the bay, the heights of Volterraio crowned by that mysterious fortress—inaccessible—untenanted, “before whose gaping doors and windows the clouds pass.”

It is a marvel how that massive keep could have been reared on such a dizzy height, where an unlooked-for puff of wind might well mean death to the unwary workman. Tradition puts it down as the work of “giants,” and personally, in this as in other matters, I prefer to believe Tradition, who knows a great deal more than she is usually given credit for.

The Emperor's imagination was fired by this spectral building. Macpherson's vagaries—under the style and title of “Ossian”—were among the books he loved best, and of the phantom fortress of Volterraio it might well be said that day that “the ghosts of the

lately dead were near, and swam on the gloomy clouds." *

Napoleon never actually visited the place. He was great on climbing during his kingship in Elba, but in this instance his friends remonstrated with him on the ground of personal risk; and, for a wonder, he listened to them.

However, this is by the way. Our drive was not a pleasant one. For one thing, the hoods of the carriages had got far beyond the water-tight stage, and the dismal trappings with which the front portions thereof were swathed about by way of protection from the weather had the effect of obstructing air and vision—everything in fact except rain.

Archibald had been rather more on the spot this time, and plunged into the first carriage with his beloved. Orestes, the Fräulein and I occupied the second. And so we bumped along. The huge blast-furnaces looked wickeder than ever; the little shops more draggled and sordid. I felt that already I hated that one interminable road out of Porto Ferraio.

But the bourne we were making for was certainly a place to see, and that without any

* "Fingal." Book I.

regard to the "very dangerous chaps." It had been the scene of a most remarkable occurrence.

Be it remembered that, towards the close of Elba's kingship, the air was thick with the wildest rumours—rumours of all kinds, some of them, however, touching upon the imminent probability of the kidnapping of Elba's king. Europe had already realised that to have dumped him down in such close proximity to the mainland was a tactical error, by no means conducive to dreamless nights. Talleyrand, at the Congress of Vienna, had openly advocated the removal of the Menace to some other locality—St. Helena was even then suggested. The more unhealthy the climate the better; it would save complications. Napoleon had due notice of all these things. Even the Prefecture of Police in Paris did not scruple to supply him with interesting information. As a result, the Elban Secret Service was largely augmented, and the Emperor resorted to the most ingenious devices to convince his custodians that he was perfectly harmless. The chasing of runaway chickens at San Martino, I have already mentioned. The playing at blind-

man's-buff with notable Elban ladies in the grounds of the same villa was also calculated to disarm suspicion. The establishment of the Porto Ferraio Opera House—the haggling with the various companies over the terms demanded—seemed to point to a settled régime. Another thing—he sought to pose as a once-great man whose intellect had been deranged by misfortune, and he succeeded. The spies that swarmed in Elba sent back to their employers the most gratifying reports as to the gradual decay of the giant mind. Rumours were even circulated as to the relations existing between the Emperor and his sister Pauline. An extreme step this, which the Exile might have omitted for his sister's sake.

But the kidnapping was the thing. Of course there was constant risk by reason of those convenient persons—the Barbary corsairs. Doubtless they had been suborned by divers powers to carry off the persecuted one and consign him to the galleys. The vigilance of the coast forts, recently re-equipped with the most modern armaments, was redoubled. Then came the extraordinary occurrence. A xebec from Tunis turned up one day and

cast anchor under the very guns of the citadel of Porto Longone. A xebec, it may be observed for the benefit of those unacquainted with nautical niceties, is a light, rapid-sailing, three-masted craft, propelled by oars as well as sails. Although the sight of such rakish vessels cruising off and on round the Elban coasts was unfortunately too familiar to the inhabitants, it was certainly unusual for one of them to bring itself in broad daylight within range of the guns of the island's principal fortress. Porto Longone began to get nervous. Was it simply coincidence that the Emperor—three little iron bedsteads and all—happened to be in residence in that same citadel, enjoying a brief respite from the whirl and giddiness of his capital? If not, how did the Corsair get his information? Was this a brazen attempt to bring off the much-discussed kidnapping?

Napoleon had certainly done his very best to shatter the nerves of his faithful subjects on this point. Even Cambronne got jumpy. One day, when reviewing the Guard in the square of Porto Ferraio, that excellent man saw a stranger in the crowd. He did not like the look of him, pounced on him, commanded sternly that he

should give a satisfactory account of himself. The man was scared to death, and babbled unintelligible things. He was marched straight off to Bertrand, who recognised him at once. He was an honest Frenchman, loyal to the Emperor, who had come to the island seeking employment. This, kindly Bertrand— anxious to soothe ruffled feelings—promised him at once. But the honest Frenchman had had quite enough of it. He left by the first boat.

If Cambronne's nerves had got so much the better of him, small wonder that the good citizens of Porto Longone took each man his spy-glass and kept careful observation on the xebec from Tunis, lying peacefully under the fort.

The captain came on shore—a burly person, his head swathed in a terrific turban—and with the aid of a couple of interpreters enquired whether the “Great God of all the earth” was there. He had a desire, he said, to prostrate himself before him. The Porto Longonians were taken aback; and, not knowing what to say at the moment, gaped. Next, the turbaned captain purchased an Elban flag, and marvel of marvels, haggled not at

all over the price. He returned to his ship, hoisted the flag and saluted it with "three salvoes of artillery." This was all very puzzling to the onlookers. The commandant of the fort informed the Emperor, who had probably been watching all the time. A boat was sent off to the ship, and the officer-in-charge informed the captain that, owing to certain sanitary regulations imposed on all ships sailing from the Levant, he could not be permitted to approach the person of the Emperor, who, it will be observed, took to himself the heavenly attributes suggested without turning a hair.

The Emperor, however, continued the message, would be going out for his usual walk presently, and then the Barbaresque pilgrim might gaze upon him from afar. The Emperor duly went out for his walk—without escort. He spied the xebec's captain in the distance, and saluted in friendly fashion. The captain prostrated himself at once with his arms crossed on his chest. Then he prepared to go back to his ship.

But by this time all Porto Longone was in the street and clustering round him. They enquired his impressions of the Hero, whom

happy fortune had permitted him to contemplate. He replied, "His eyes glitter like crystal!"

Then they asked him whether he proposed to make war, as usual, on the island. He made answer, "I do not make war on God." Profound sensation amongst the citizens. Enigmatically he added, "It is not the little people who are treacherous, but the great." The Emperor sent food and presents to the ship, and the captain departed saying, "Addio addio," as if he had been wound up and would never stop.

So the xebec sailed away. "That is one thorn the less in our toes," observed the Emperor to his entourage. But they still maintained the same precautions.

News of this remarkable visit spread apace. At Genoa, Leghorn, Piombino, Civita Vecchia, and Naples, the merchant ships in port foraged around for the flag of Elba—with its Golden Bees—and flew it. The renown of the new Monarch grew daily. Colonel Campbell heard of this incident, and was sorely puzzled. Elban opinion suspected Barbary pirates, as a whole, of being in the pay of the Vienna Congress. Campbell, on the other

hand, saw them in close league with Napoleon, carrying messages for him to Corsica, Genoa and Naples, where Murat was reigning as king. He hurried off to Leghorn, consulted the French Consul Mariotti, and the police authorities. They did not concern themselves greatly about the matter. Campbell sat him down to write to Talleyrand to the effect that Tunisians were cordially welcomed at the Court of Porto Ferraio, and that one of the Barbary States had a cruiser always on the spot, thus keeping the whole coast in constant alarm.

He went to Florence and consulted the Austrian governor. Here he met with Baron Hyde de Neuville, come specially from Paris to make secret enquiries as to the goings-on of Bonaparte on the Island. By talking together, these two excellent men contrived to get each other thoroughly scared. Elba began to figure in the mind of each as a very spider's web of plots—invisible—intangible. Then, by degrees, things became more definite—the master-plot stood revealed in all its hideousness. The Moorish pirates were to take the Emperor to Toulon—treachery would deliver into his hands the fleet, the arsenal, and the

town. Hyde de Neuville posted back to Paris to lay the news before his Royal Master. Needless to say there was not a word of truth in it. What the precise motives of the turbaned captain may have been we shall probably never know. Perhaps he contemplated one of the familiar raids, and was deterred by the Emperor's unfamiliar (to him) defensive organisation. Perhaps he was only a practical joker; in which case he probably came to regret the money expended in the purchase of that flag; perhaps—

But here we are, bumping over the stones of Porto Longone; and it is growing dark, and we sha'n't get back to-night. Just like Orestes !

CHAPTER X

PONS

THROUGH Porto Longone the way lies to Rio Marina, where the iron mines are—a grimy spot coated with iron-rust, which, it is said, assimilates itself to the very food one is invited to eat. I did not get as far myself, so I do not know from personal experience.

It is a place of tall, ugly houses (six storeys or thereabouts) let out in sections to the unfortunate wretches who make a living, and, incidentally, turn a rusty red, by iron-mining. If you live on any floor but the ground floor you let down a basket by a bit of string for your letters and provisions. You drape your washing—be the garments of an intimate nature or otherwise—from window to window like gala-day decorations, as in every Italian town.

Elba has gone mad over iron mines of late,



RIO MARINA : THE MINES

and seems anxious to pose as a centre of Industrialism rather than in her true rôle as—save only for bombardments, piratical raids, massacres, and such-like trivialities—a haunt of Ancient Peace.

Mention of Rio Marina recalls a personality perhaps the most outstanding of all those that hovered round Napoleon in his first exile—Pons d'Herault, commonly known as Pons, the director of the mines. Pons was a man of obstinacy, simplicity, and impeccability. He was a Corsican and a constant reader of Fénelon. He had been Napoleon's comrade-in-arms when they both were young, but Pons remained staunch to the Republic—the Empire nauseated him. Away in Elba, absorbed in the iron-ore industry, he heard of the Imperial conquests with deep disgust, and went on with his work. Then came the proclamation of the Elban kingdom; and, strange to tell, the bigoted Republican forgot his bigotry. Misfortunes had, in the eyes of Pons, made atonement for all, and he was content to continue to serve as the loyal subject of the new king.

For all that, he could not help administering little pin-pricks (some intentional, others

due to nervousness or preoccupation) from time to time. He would leave his copy of "Télémaque" about in the track of the Emperor—open at certain pages which bore, heavily underlined, such passages as :

"The king should show less obstinacy and pride than any of his subjects."

Or,

"Minos loved his people more dearly than his own children."

Pons' little daughter, on an occasion of State, was presented to the Emperor in due form. The child was, of course, a staunch Republican, with all the whole-hearted bigotry of childhood. When she reached home, her mother, bursting with innocent pride, asked whether she did not think herself a very lucky little girl to have had the chance of seeing so great a man "close to." "Yes, mamma," was the firm rejoinder; "but I think I took too much notice of him, and I am sorry for it."

Prior to the accession to the throne of Elba, there was existing in the hands of the incorruptible but not "sea-green" Pons the sum of 229,000 francs—representing mining profits which there had not been time to pay over

to the French Government before the island's transformation.

The Exile, being short of money, had his eye on this snug little sum. He sent over to Rio Marina and demanded it. Pons flatly refused. It was the property of the French Government, said he, and he would do nothing against his conscience. For two solid months they argued about it ; then his Majesty lost his patience and rode over to Rio Marina in person. It was his boast that nobody had ever said "No" to him. Pons said it, however, without turning a hair.

Napoleon was infuriated. His self-control was gone for the moment. In a voice "that made the very windows shake," he roared :—"I am still Emperor !" But "it made no difference," as the late Mr. Herbert Campbell used to sing so sweetly ; Pons would not budge, and the wrathful one went back to the Mulini without having laid his hands on a single penny.

Then Peyrusse, the Treasurer, was despatched, and the message that he carried was a stern one. If Pons persisted in his outrageous conduct, grenadiers would be sent to compel him to obey. Pons remarked

firmly that three hundred thousand bayonets would not make him hand over a sou, and if any grenadiers *did* turn up, he would pitch them out of the window. He would refer the matter to Paris and then yield, if his conscience was agreeable.

The Emperor took no notice of this outburst of calm courage, though his annoyance made itself felt among the Court. And there the matter ended.

But Pons, in all essentials, was a loyal subject, and none knew that better than his sovereign. He was, on that same 4th of May, 1814, among those who stood by bareheaded, when the solemn *Te Deum* was sung in the piazza of Porto Ferraio and the Emperor knelt in prayer. He was also present at the subsequent reception in the Town Hall, and at its conclusion received his first shock—which was to be the first of many, all nobly borne. At midnight the Emperor invited himself to breakfast with Pons for the following morning at nine o'clock.

So Pons, overwhelmed with this signal but inconvenient honour, took him a lantern, mounted his horse, and rode away in the darkness, through the lonely country. Before

dawn he had ordered the nets to be cast, and these did remarkably well, producing one fish of twenty-five pounds, without reckoning in the smaller fry. Pons began to grow more cheerful. He sent for his gardener, and gave orders for the decoration of his terrace, on a scale suitable for the occasion.

At the hour of five in the morning, Napoleon and his suite clattered out of Porto Ferraio. His reception at Rio Marina was one of the wildest enthusiasm ; that old reprobate, the ex-brigand mayor of Rio Montana, dropping on one knee in excess of emotion and gurgling " In te, Domine, speravi."

So far so good. Then, however, came the hitch of the day, for Pons' gardener had decorated the house entirely with lilies. The poor man had no malicious intent. He had merely taken what flowers he could find.

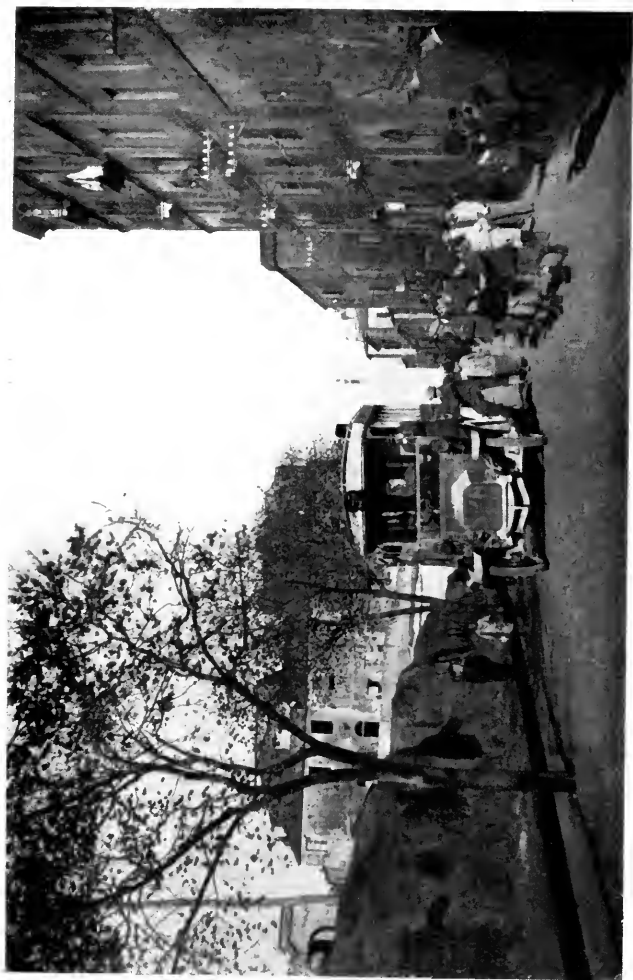
" You've chosen an appropriate sign-board for my hotel," remarked the Emperor, smiling sourly. Pons, noticing the lilies for the first time, fell into dire confusion, which was presently aggravated by an untimely demonstration of the rusty-faced miners. First of all he addressed his monarch as M. le Duc, then as M. le Comte, finally as plain

Monsieur, whereat his Majesty forgot his annoyance.

Pons remained to the end faithful to his Emperor. His presence of mind alone rendered possible the dramatic escape from Elba, and he begged hard, addressing a petition jointly to Marie-Louise, the Emperor of Austria, and the Prince Regent of England, to be allowed to accompany Napoleon into his second exile at Saint Helena, but to no purpose.

"Old Father Pons," as his friends called him, after having filled sundry offices under Napoleon, Louis Philippe, and the subsequent régime—offices which one less scrupulous would have made thoroughly remunerative—died, in poverty, at the age of seventy-nine. He was an honest man.

But to return from Pons and the past. I do not wish to dwell on our sojourn that night at Porto Longone. Not that I had, personally, any particular complaint to make—being accustomed more or less to take things as they come. The ladies, however, complained of fleas. Their plaint may or may not have been justified. I do not know; fleas never bother me. Orestes disappeared after dinner,



RIO MARINA

I suppose to find the local barber—I felt sorry, for his sake, that there was no gardener on hand—and the rain came down in sheets. It drummed on the roof of our little inn, and kept Cecilia awake all night. I believe the rest of the party (leaving out Orestes and myself) would have been happier, on the whole, up yonder in the fortress on the hill, with the “dreadful chaps.”

The day broke grey but rainless. The air of anxiety that I had already begun to notice on the countenance of Orestes was becoming even more marked.

“What’s it all about?” I enquired mildly, as we sat on the side of a boat, contemplating the sea, and waiting for the others to appear.

“I tink,” said he, “we leave dis dam island, dam quick.”

“We do nothing of the kind,” I replied firmly. “We’ve got to see everything there is to see, and then we’ll go.”

“Dis is a rum affair,” said Orestes darkly.

“Don’t be a fool,” said I. “The milord wishes to visit the mines this morning.”

“Den let ’im!” snarled Orestes. “’E is one dam fool pig. ’E is nodings to me.”

Orestes remained silent for a space. Then

he announced suddenly, "I go and ask of de barber fellow," and he went.

Before me, through the mist, across the little bay, loomed mountains—Elba is all mountains. Maybe, when they get thoroughly up-to-date, they'll start a volcano. The island distinctly suggests volcanoes, but enterprise has been long dormant. Somewhere away over there was the City of Refuge, Capo Liveri, peopled, as Orestes put it, with "not good fellows." Somewhere, not much farther distant, Napoleon's flagship—the brig *Inconstant* (16 guns, 60 men)—was wrecked one stormy night—January 11th, 1815, to be precise. And this brings me to the Elban Monarch's fleet. It consisted of five ships. The *Inconstant*, already mentioned, whose commander, Taillade, could never, it is said, go to sea without sacrificing a meal; the *Caroline* (1 gun, 16 men), employed almost exclusively for the postal service to the mainland; the *Mouche*, and the *Abeille* feluccas (8 men each), and the xebec *Étoile* (6 guns, 16 men, 85 tons, bought on the 5th August, 1815, at Leghorn for the sum of 8822 francs).

The numbers of the crews given err on the

ideal side. The Elban mariners were not keen to leave their fishing, and the Navy had, to a large extent, to be recruited from the mainland. But the wreck of the *Inconstant* was a severe shock to the Exile. He was relying on her to accomplish the abdication of his ten months' throne, and that night, tossed and buffeted by a furious hurricane, her commander found himself, owing to a foolhardy attempt to back into Porto Ferraio, in the midst of rocks. Sails were furled at once, and anchors cast. These held up for half the night, and no longer. Towards morning, Porto Ferraio, "sleeping through the turmoil, with shutters tightly closed," heard the distress guns booming.

The Emperor, up at the Mulini, heard them. He hopped out of bed in a second, found a horse and galloped off to the spot, but the good Taillade, having got rid of his meal, had the opportunity to look about him. He spied a sandy and opportune beach, and when the cables parted, let her drift on to it. As the brig grounded, an elderly gentleman was observed on the poop, gesticulating and apparently praying, much to the consternation of those on shore, who had already

reached the "nervy" state which preceded the final departure of Elba's king.

Who could he be, and what was he doing there, and why was it, and similar questions crowded on the perturbed minds of those who, through the wiles of the arch-humourist, were already beginning to look upon their neighbours as spies of the deepest dye.

He was only an excise officer from Ajaccio, one of the Emperor's relations, who had come to pay a visit, bringing with him a horse as a present. The venerable one was saved, with all the ship's company—but the horse was not so fortunate.

Poor Taillade suffered for this catastrophe. He was accused of not having been on deck at the time of the disaster (which was probably true), and there and then dismissed.

His place as Admiral of the Fleet was taken by an ex-pilot of the French Navy, who was even less competent than Taillade. But then Napoleon had no choice; and beggars cannot be choosers.

"Well," said the voice of Milord Harrison, "dam nuisance being landed in this place. Beastly day!"

"It is," I assented.

“ What about those damned mines ? ” he enquired, as the rest of the party (minus Orestes) appeared, fully equipped.

“ I haven’t an idea,” I replied, with truth ; because the mines recalled Pons to my thoughts, and that presence of mind of his which countered the only risk that seemed likely to jeopardise the king’s escape from Elba.

CHAPTER XI

PIANOSA

IT happened in this wise. While lulling the suspicions of the entire Continent by his eccentric behaviour, which pointed to insanity more than anything else, the Exile was making elaborate preparations for "going home." On the 26th of February (Sunday), the usual reception was held at the Mulini. The military and civil authorities were, as usual, present, and, as was also usual, the Emperor said "a few words." The usual rules of etiquette were, however, suspended—even the "merest adjutants" were bidden. I have often wondered what a mere adjutant was like, and how one would know him if one met him, but that does not concern us now.

The Emperor was grave in manner, but spoke with unwonted emotion. One of the most valuable assets in his eventful career was his capacity for acting. Before, he had

elected to take the rôle of senile decay. Now, he chose that of manly vigour. Such was his personal magnetism that, whatever part he fixed upon, however discrepant from preconceived notions of him it might be, he always carried his audience. Thus it was that Sunday morning at the Mulini. He began by asking people how they did, whether this one's baby had the toothache or that one's the mumps; whether it would rain the day after to-morrow, and other little helpful questions, showing his care for his subjects' welfare. Then suddenly he announced that he proposed to return to Paris that evening, left the assembled multitude and retired to his private apartments, which, owing to lack of space, were not numerous, though moderately convenient.

Then the throng of invited ones flocked out into the little street. "The Emperor is going!" they cried, one to another. "Where, and why?"

To reconquer Europe with an army of 673 men—all that he could rely upon taking with him—would be a task beyond even his optimism.

Pons gives the figure as 673, and that would include simply the Guard, officers and men,

and general staff. In addition, however, there might be reckoned 108 Polish light cavalry, 400 Corsican and Elban volunteers, and 50 gendarmes, though some of the Poles did, as a matter of fact, remain behind to man the forts of the island.

At the Emperor's dramatic announcement at, and subsequent retirement from, his *Levéé*, a good deal of talk began to buzz around in Porto Ferraio. Cafés were crowded, people gathered in bunches in the street asking each other what was in the wind. But they were all loyal subjects—the spies, prowling round as ever, got very little authenticity upon which to grind their teeth. Something was up. Nobody quite knew what.

At eleven, a boat came ashore, under Fort Stella. It carried one passenger, who went straight to the Mulini. The Emperor issued an order.

“The grenadiers at work in the gardens” (be it observed and noted, for it is one of the most humourous features of the whole thing, that these grizzled veterans had on this particular day applied themselves to trowel and wheelbarrow with even greater zest than usual) “will continue their work until 3 p.m.”

Preparations for the embarkation were already far advanced. Ships were forbidden, on pain of being pummelled by the guns of the forts, to leave the island or to approach it. This settled the matter as far as the spies were concerned. They could get no news through to the mainland—neither could they receive instructions. Still, bottled up as they were in the island, they were not very much the wiser. That something was going to happen was all they could learn. That in itself—embellished with the imaginative touches habitually cultivated by these gentlemen—would make an interesting report for, say, the Austrian governor in Florence. One of them, who has come down to history as the “Oil Merchant,” did make a determined effort to leave Porto Ferraio.

In the bay a barque was lying, whose skipper consented, for the modest sum of sixty francs, to put him across. The moment he set foot on deck he was hailed by the brig *Inconstant*, whose officer demanded his destination. The vendor of oil assured M. le Lieutenant that his intentions were of the most innocent. As a matter of fact it was the glorious weather that had tempted him—

he hoped there was no harm in that—to make a little sea excursion.

M. le Lieutenant replied that it would be wiser for him to return to the shore at once if he did not want a bullet in his head ; whereat the vendor of oil showed due prudence and returned. But I am anticipating matters, and have inadvertently skipped over that occasion of Pons' presence of mind, which is my first excuse for this chapter.

It was on the 24th (the preceding Friday) that the first hitch occurred. Everything had been going on smoothly in the matter of arming, victualling and generally equipping the little flotilla. By ten in the morning of that Friday, the *Inconstant* and the xebec *Étoile* had got their supplies of fresh water on board. Then the sails of the English corvette were observed in the offing. The general consternation can be imagined. Here was Colonel Campbell back from Florence, and Heaven knew when he would be off again. And everything had been going on so nicely. Some of the bolder spirits suggested an attempt to capture the corvette and the odious, but conscientious, Campbell. This was mere folly. Even if successful, such a proceeding would

be of small material advantage; if unsuccessful, which was quite on the cards, it would have the effect of enraging England, whose goodwill the Emperor had of late professed himself anxious to obtain.

Preparations were at once stopped—harbour and shipping assumed a guileless air of simplicity as the corvette dropped anchor in the bay. Then Porto Ferraio gave a sigh of relief. Campbell was not on board, but six English tourists were, and these were escorted by Captain Adye to the Mulini (taking the road along the ramparts to avoid notice), for the purpose of paying their respects to the Exile.

The Exile's feelings at this apparently indefinite postponement of his flight must have been akin to irritation, but he showed no trace of anything of the kind. For an hour he conversed (cursing inwardly) with Captain Adye, who showed no disposition to hurry away. Having taken leave at last, the Captain betakes him to Bertrand to ask him how he does. Bertrand conceals his impatience, and enquires kindly after the absent Colonel Campbell, and the precise date of his return. Judicious Bertrand. Then Captain Adye

walks slowly down to the harbour, stopping on his way to observe wonderingly the veterans of the Guard, busy in their little gardens. It was a peaceful scene, and reassuring. He boarded his ship and sailed away. He had not rounded the point before the embarkation of artillery had begun, and all preparations were in full swing once more.

Meanwhile, Pons, away at Rio Marina, knew nothing of this contretemps. In pursuance of orders issued so far back as the 16th February, Pons was busy equipping and loading two large transports—the largest he could find—something over ninety tons each. By the 24th—the day of Adye's disconcerting arrival—his job was finished, and the two ships had already started, when a courier, hot from Porto Ferraio, clatters furiously down the rust-grimed street of Rio Marina. The transports must not sail; and, even as he gives the message, the English corvette heaves in sight round the point, heading for Palmaiola. It seemed as if everything was to go wrong after all. To send after them, ordering them to put back to Rio, or into Porto Longone, would excite Captain Adye's suspicion, which probably may have been

slightly stirred during his brief visit to the capital. If they kept on their course, and the Captain took it into his head to search them, the fat would, frankly and fairly, be in the fire.

Pons reflected for a brief second. He had no idea as to who was on board the corvette, but thought it more than likely that Campbell was. So he sat him down and wrote him a cordial invitation to dinner for the following week. A messenger whose reputation for being an "intelligent" man still lives, though his name has, I fear, been, comparatively speaking, lost, was at once despatched with the letter.

Captain Adye gave suitable thanks in Campbell's name, and promised to give him the invitation. Then he made just the very enquiry that was feared. What, asked he, was the nature and purpose of yonder transports, and what their cargo?

"Minerals for Romagna," said the intelligent man, and the corvette went her ways, to fetch up presently at Leghorn. That same evening the transports crept slowly into the bay of Porto Ferraio. Pons had proved himself worthy.

"I have seen de barber fellow," said the voice of Orestes behind me. "'E say, dere is beautiful valley of Monserrat, where dere is one 'Ermitage. I tink we see 'im. Dis no climbing affair—and dere is much of de great Napoleon. 'E was dere once."

A few drops of rain squeezed themselves out of the swollen, bloated-looking clouds. They were big drops, and pattered resonantly on the boat whereon I was still sitting.

At first it did seem hard—but even those clouds had silver linings.

"I shall go back to the hotel," announced milord. "I've never had such an infernal hump as this beastly place gives me. The other one's bad enough."

So back to the Bee went milord, his entourage and Archibald. Cecilia, after a show of wifely reluctance, went likewise, as also did both the carriages.

"Do you think the milord is going to pay for these?" I enquired of Orestes, as the cortège jolted off.

"I tink not, sir. 'E no dam good. 'E afraid of dis water from de clouds because dere is no soap in it. Dat is de way of English gentlemen; and when 'e get back 'e will say

to de cabmen chaps, dat is all right, do not 'ave anxieties ! 'E leave de anxieties to us."

" But," said I, " we shall need another carriage of some sort for ourselves."

" Yes, sir, I go see about 'im."

" But it's going to pour with rain."

" You wish, sir, to see dat beautiful valley ? "

" Of course."

" Den I tink it safer we go dis afternoon. Perhaps we catch colds ; get dami wet. It cannot be helped. We must not put 'im off. It is dangerous affair. I tink we leave de island to-morrow. I tink it better we go not at all."

" In that case, don't chatter. Go and find something to go in."

" I tink all tings for de very best," said Orestes as he turned mournfully away on his errand.

It seemed difficult to get away from Porto Longone. The chances were that Orestes might not succeed in discovering anything in the way of conveyances more robust than a decrepit donkey-cart. It is a great island—Elba—but most of its carrying resources seemed concentrated at Porto Ferraio. Yet Elba in her kingly days ranked, as one might

say, with empires. She was not above colonising. Lying more or less in the centre of the Tuscan Archipelago, it was inevitable that the spectacle of so many smaller islands lying near by should tempt an ambitious monarch to annex those of them that seemed likely to be profitable.

There is, for example, Pianosa, a flat island, only visible—by reason of its flatness—in clear weather from the southern extremity of Elba, and distant no more than thirteen kilometres. It measures five leagues in circumference, and the soil is, for the most part, pretty good. So excellent indeed is the grass of Pianosa that the good folk of Elba had a custom of going thither and carrying it away for fodder.

Once upon a time people had lived in Pianosa, but the Barbary corsairs, when they found how convenient a rendezvous the island made, massacred the residents straightway, and nobody had the courage to live there again until 1806, when some intrepid men of Elba set forth to people it once more. The Barbary corsairs were not to blame for the failure of the gallant little experiment. The English, this time, delivered the attack,

and so, finding their defences demolished, and themselves helpless, the settlers went home again.

Napoleon, however, gazing one clear summer evening, from a rocky height somewhere near Cape Calamity, into the deep violet haze of the Mediterranean, espied this flat little country—so flat as hardly to show above the waves.

He had long come to the conclusion that his Island of Elba was a trifle small for a kingdom, and he pined for conquest. Therefore an army of occupation was at once despatched to Pianosa. It consisted, in all, of 40 men—20 gunners and sappers of the Guard, and 20 soldiers of the Corsican Battalion.

The army was under the supreme command of Goltman—Commandant of Porto Longone—with one Lieutenant Larabit as his second.

They took with them a priest, some masons and a supply of provisions—amongst which biscuits are specified. They were to construct an adequate battery within the space of forty-eight hours, in case of possible attack from our old friends the pirates.

In addition to this, a bomb-proof battery

was to be erected at their leisure, then a church, and then a village for future settlers.

All the goats, with which the island swarmed, were to be slain, lest their presence should prejudice the future agricultural prosperity of Pianosa.

The army duly landed, and found no trace of any dwelling—no shelter of any kind—save only certain caverns that lined the sea-shore. They were, of course, perfectly weather-tight, but laboured under the disadvantage of having, in days past, been used as tombs—you could even see the places that had been hollowed out to receive the actual corpses.

The Emperor's proclamation ran thus :

"The Commandant will see that the caves are cleaned out, and that fires are lighted to get rid of the insects. The priest from Campo will be appointed vicar of the parish. He will take what is necessary with him, and will say Mass regularly in the open fields until such time as a church is built. The village will be constructed from designs submitted to my approval."

Goltman, however, was not entirely happy. He had been appointed Provisional Governor of Pianosa. Well and good. It was a proud

position, and he was proud of it. So were Mrs. Goltman and Miss Goltman. They rejoiced in the promotion of their lord, and sailed with the expedition. Whether they insisted on going, or whether Goltman insisted on taking them, to form, with Lieutenant Larabit, the nucleus of a little vice-regal court in the new province, I do not know, neither does it matter.

It is sufficient that they went, and saw the caves in which they were expected to pass the night—the shapes of corpses hollowed in the rocks, and other delights. The Provisional Governor swore that he would sleep in no such place; Mrs. Goltman neither would nor could, and Miss Goltman—out of loyalty to her parents, doubtless, as well as from personal predilections—said likewise. But it was all very well to say such things. The fact remained that the island held literally no other shelter whatever.

The Provisional Governor made up his mind quickly. He ordered Larabit to employ the sappers in building a house for himself, Mrs. Goltman and Miss Goltman first. The battery could wait.

Lieutenant Larabit, of the sappers of the

Guard, replied curtly to the effect that the battery couldn't wait, and wasn't going to wait, and that he was already busy with it. When it was finished, however, nothing would give him more pleasure than to see about a suitable residence for the Provisional Governor.

In view of the Emperor's proclamation, the attitude of Larabit was not an unreasonable one. But the Commandant took another view. Their discussion became heated, they called each other names—they crossed swords. The two deductions that I feel certain of from these circumstances are that Larabit cherished neither an innocent passion for Miss Goltman nor a guilty one for Mrs. And that is something.

To make matters worse, the weather turned nasty, and communication with Elba was cut off. Provisions ran short—there was no bread. When the Army of Occupation had slain and eaten all the goats they had to fall back on the biscuits, then on such fish as they could catch (they could none of them be called fishermen), then on cockles. When the wine was all finished they took to brandy and water, or vinegar, as individual tastes

prompted. There was a great deal of bad temper, and acts of insubordination were numerous.

As soon as the weather permitted, the Emperor despatched, by the brig *Inconstant*, a flock of sheep, two cows, thirty cocks and hens, some pigs, a lot of doors and windows left over from the various demolitions in Porto Ferraio, and, for want of a clock, a "sand-glass" to measure the hours. Soon after that he set sail in person to visit his new dominion. This was not strictly in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau—but the Illustrious Man was not above stretching a point now and then, when it seemed worth while.

Next, the Island of Palmaiola—a barren spot, but commanding the Piombino canal—was duly occupied and equipped with batteries.

Then poor Colonel Campbell began to notice what was going on, and laughed heartily at the conquests. "It is for the English," he observed, "that the Emperor is giving himself all this trouble. Some fine day we shall come along and grab the lot." But this did not come to pass. Weeks went by, and

batteries were constructed, and Pianosa gradually turned itself into a position of some strategic importance.

Then the gallant Colonel began to be uneasy, and to mention the Treaty of Fontainebleau in conversation. But the Emperor never seemed to understand what he was driving at.

Goltman was a long time getting over that grievance of his about the cavern. He made a special visit to Elba to complain of this mode of living as unsuitable for Mrs. and Miss Goltman, and also of Larabit's want of proper respect. On that occasion he stood in the road and abused the Emperor in public like one possessed, until Bertrand threatened to lock him up; and then he stopped. Napoleon had some unruly persons in his kingdom of Elba, but in this case, I fancy, the petticoats were at the bottom of it.

CHAPTER XII

THE OTHER HERMITAGE

IT was not an ideal day for Monserrat, one of Elba's beauty spots (to use the vilest phrase of modern times). I began to think that Cecilia and the rest had shown sound sense at last, as Orestes and I left Porto Longone behind us, and the rain began to drip attentively down our necks.

The carriage was perhaps as good as could be reasonably expected, but its springs were a farce and its hood a mockery. The driver seemed to me to be a fairly respectable sort of man, but Orestes did not appear to share this view. "'E is de only fellow I could see," he explained, as we proceeded on our way. "I do not like 'im. I tink 'e look at me some-'ow funny. I like not dat."

I enquired whether Orestes had in his mind any clue to such extraordinary behaviour as this of the driver's.

“ How did he look ? ” said I.

“ ‘E looked funny—just funny,” replied Orestes. “ I say de Mister wish to drive to de beautiful Monserrat valley. ‘E say, not dis afternoon. I say, yes, dis afternoon, or else never in de world. ‘E say, ‘ But, Signore, it rain damnable.’ I say, ‘ We care notings. We go to de ‘Ermitage of Monserrat. It is ver’ important.’ Den ‘e look funny at me.”

On the whole, I was not surprised that the man should have looked funny. He may well have regarded us as mentally deranged. It was certainly not a day for sight-seeing.

There was no scenery to look at—only the inexpressible dreariness of sea and mountain which is as peculiar to Italy in bad weather as the perfect blue of the one and the magical tints of the other in fine.

It was an ideal afternoon on which Napoleon visited the gorge of Monserrat. Pons was with him, likewise Grand Maréchal Bertrand. Those two only.

“ On quitting the Porto Longone road,” writes Pons, “ we took a straight path, bordered by tall cypresses, in a ravine shaded with aloes and Barbary figs, at the bottom

of which a tiny rivulet babbles, to lose itself at last in the sea."

This was probably the only occasion when Pons ever verged on poetry, except that of his favourite "Télémaque." The idea of the rivulet is Swinburnian, of course, but Pons could not be expected to know that. It is to the credit of Elba that the various features just mentioned were still there on the occasion of our visit. Nothing had changed materially since Napoleon's time. If the Elbans had been British, they would, long ere this, have dubbed the gorge a "Fairy Glen," placed a turnstile at the entrance, hedged the place about with barbed wire, and charged sixpence for admittance.

But the enterprise of the island still retains its respect for the romantic.

Pons rode a little Corsican pony, Bertrand the great charger "Euphrates," which the Emperor had given him. Napoleon, being in jovial mood, required that the two should have a race. Grand Maréchal Bertrand protested with all respect. It would not, he said, be quite fair, as his massive steed would have got there and back before Pons had started. His Imperial Master insisted. Bertrand's

charger stumbled hopelessly among the boulders which strewed the ravine. Pons' pony skipped about like a goat, and before many minutes had passed, Bertrand gave in.

Loud was the Emperor's laughter. Nothing pleased him so much as teasing his Grand Maréchal, who could never see or take a joke. He could, however, make them on occasions without knowing it.

When the Elban Monarchy was yet young, it was Bertrand who concerned himself most genuinely and sincerely about the dramatic change in his master's fortunes, and what the Emperor's feelings must be at finding himself sovereign monarch of an insignificant speck on the map, like Elba.

Like the loyal servant he was, he tried every means in his power to soften the blow. When the Emperor had occasion to visit the various portions of his limited dominions, Grand Maréchal Bertrand always took good care that large crowds should be present—so, he thought, Napoleon might still cherish the illusion that he was Europe's scourge. But the population of the island available for the purpose being restricted, it followed that these same crowds comprised the same per-

sons in each case. In time Napoleon came to recognise their faces, but he never said a word to Bertrand.

They met a man slouching along the path, and stopped him. He was, he said, a vine-grower. "A vine-grower!" exclaimed the Emperor. He must have been walking at the time, for he stooped and picked up some fragments of white stone, which are common enough in the ground of those regions. "Is this kind of thing," he asked, "any good for vine-growing?"

The man looked at him with unruffled mien. "It does well enough for white wine," he said, "but we like a rather fatter soil for the red." For this rejoinder he received twenty francs. Truly little jests were assets in the days of the kingdom of Elba.

They came to the Hermitage, where, as Pons writes, "the Hermits had scraped together a little earth and planted some trees and shrubs. The Church is simple and poor, but well-kept. The Hermit's cell—a convenient little house enough—is situated on a trellis-covered terrace." I suppose it was much the same when we were there, but we could not rhapsodise, or rather think deliber-

ate descriptions (the most tedious form of thought) as we tramped along in the driving rain—leaving our carriage waiting for us at the cross-roads. I should have liked to see Monserrat on a fine day. As it was, the cypresses stood for steeples of gloom and the aloes for annihilation, while the Barbary figs, if we'd only known which they were, would have symbolised eternal disintegration.

It was a comfort to remember that the Emperor had been luckier than we. The hermit came out to meet him. He did not come to meet us for the good reason that our courage failed us, and we turned back before we'd got anywhere near the Hermitage.

He greeted the Emperor, and remarked that times were bad. A sensible remark of a sensible man. It is fairly popular, even to-day, in political and other circles.

“Once upon a time,” pursued the venerable man, “the mariners of this neighbourhood had cherished a holy Faith in the Blessed Virgin of Monserrat, and consecrated many masses to her. It is quite a change now, and this deplorable state of things will go on, sire, without a doubt, until the Virgin has gratified faithful men

with a really good miracle." The Emperor's reply is not recorded. It was probably sympathetic. He was always sympathetic in those days.

He advanced as far as the threshold of the little church, turned round and looked at the view. He stood silent for a while ; it is thought that the prospect of that wild, sad, mysterious country may, like Volterraio, have reminded him of his favourite Ossian.

"The view is beautiful," said the Emperor ; "yet I fancy it would look more imposing in a thunderstorm."

He enquired of the obsequious hermit whether lightning did not sometimes do serious damage on Monte Serrato—the jagged peak that rose frowning behind them.

Lightning was frequent, the hermit replied, but, thanks to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, the Hermitage had remained unharmed.

Then Napoleon laughed and pointed to the surrounding mountains. "They protect you too," he observed. "They are the real lightning conductors !"

"I agree, I agree," assented the reverend recluse ; "but, believe me, sire, it is wise to

allow people to think that it is the result of influences from on high."

The Emperor shrugged his shoulders. To do him strict justice, he had a certain amount of conscience, and, where his own particular interests were not concerned, no use at all for humbug. The eremite perceived something of this and, to change the conversation, suggested humbly that his Majesty might enter the little church—which, by the way, was lighted up.

The Emperor entered, knelt for a moment, gave such alms as he was disposed to give, and came out. A luncheon hamper had been sent for from Porto Longone, and it had arrived. Napoleon had it unpacked there and then, and graciously invited Bertrand and Pons to partake with him. There is no mention of the hermit being included in the invitation. That frank confession about lightning had probably annoyed the Emperor; so the poor man went hungry.

After lunch he slept for a quarter of an hour—a rather difficult feat if anybody tries it seriously—and the three set out on their return journey. "He was as gay as when he started," writes the good Pons; "and

these moments were verily his happy moments." It is quite likely.

There is but one other point touching this particular expedition of the Emperor's. At one stage of his return, he reached a height from which he could view the sea all round his kingdom. He sighed and said, "*Mon île est bien petite !*"

CHAPTER XIII

THE ESCAPE

I FRANKLY confess that that Monserat trip disappointed me. We had all our wetting for nothing. Picturesque spots on a wet day are not encouraging. And then there was the hermit. As we jolted back to Porto Ferraio (we were going straight through this time) I thought about the hermit. Was his successor like him? Would he, I mean, have come out and talked to us about miracles and thunderbolts in the same candid way in which the other one had talked to Napoleon? And my only companion was Orestes, grumbling about the weather, and dwelling insistently on the probability of his becoming "the dead corpse" as a consequence of that day's work.

"You insisted on going," said I, stung to some feeble show of resentment by these ruminations.

“ I do wish to please you, sir.”

Our carriage was now climbing the steep ascent which leads out of Porto Longone towards the capital. Mountains were hidden in mist—mist lay on the face of the land all round us, damp and suicide-inspiring. After all, thought I, we can do this kind of job just as well in England.

“ Well, you haven’t, anyway. We might have waited till the weather cleared.”

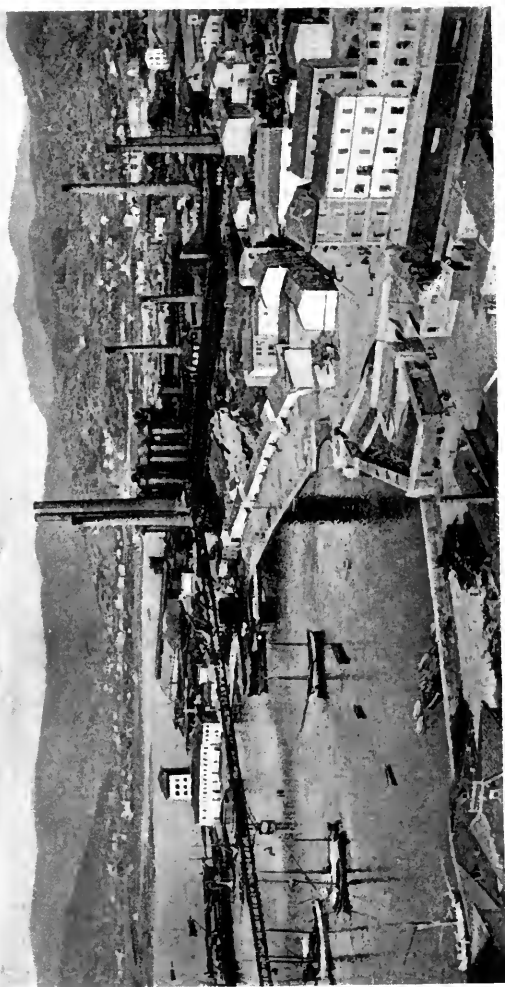
“ Dat would not ’ave been good,” replied Orestes firmly. “ I tink we leave take of de Isola d’Elba to-morrow morning.”

We had topped the hill and were now on high ground—more or less level for a little space—from which, in decent weather, the roadstead of Porto Ferraio and the chimneys of the blast-furnaces could be seen and enjoyed. At the moment there was nothing but mist for the eye to rejoice in. The base thought crossed my mind that possibly Orestes was right—that it would, in fact, be a good and salutary thing to leave the Isola d’Elba to-morrow morning, and by the first steamer (departing somewhere about 7.45). Possibly Milord Harrison had already come to a similar conclusion. I don’t know why I

always distrusted that man. I believe he was a very honest fellow.

Night had fallen when we passed the blast-furnaces, shooting out tongues of flame to the fog. The pavements glistened dolefully under the tiny illuminations which the municipal authorities found adequate. The Palm Court was deserted, for rain had again begun to fall heavily. There was but one figure visible on the Grand Staircase, and he was nearly at the top. A ghastly night, with the prospect of several hours with nothing to do, before bed should become a sane proposition.

The Bee stepped forward to meet us in person. He congratulated us on our safe return. The others, he said, had felt much profound (*molto profondo*) anxiety. They had, such it is to be presumed was the form their anxiety took, made a good dinner and were now playing cards upstairs in a room which, at the special desire of the Signora (i.e. Cecilia), he had had forcibly converted into a sitting-room. Our dinner was ready the instant we wanted it. It turned out that that was the instant—for we were both hungry—and the dinner, a comforting one, was even



PORTO FERRARIO : THE FURNACES

then ready. Truly, there were elements of greatness in the Bee.

“ I like dis not at all,” grumbled Orestes over the macaroni.

“ It’s the best I’ve tasted yet,” said I. “ And you needn’t twist forks about to get it into your mouth ; they make it a decent size here.”

“ I meant not dat,” sighed Orestes. “ De macaroni is good. I mean dere are tings I like not.”

I pointed out that many of us had the same feeling—that complete unanimity would be monstrous—that divergencies of opinion tended rather to stimulate the intellect than otherwise, and similar reflections of undoubted weight.

Orestes shrugged his shoulders and sighed. “ You are English gentleman,” said he. “ You will ’ave your joke. But I see it not. I go find out sometings to-night.” And presently he made his excuses and went out. So did I. I had no desire to join the card-party upstairs. I donned an oilskin, and mounted the Grand Staircase.

Now by a freak of fortune, common enough in those climes as in ours, the sky was clear

and the stars brilliant. Only the rain-soaked aspect of the steps bore witness to the recent deluge.

I reached the point whither I had ascended the first morning after our landing. Once more the view spread itself, or would have done so but for the darkness—descending rows of houses—the Harbour Gate—the roadstead—and beyond, the mountains and the giant-built fortress of Volterraio. I could not, even by daylight, have made out the smaller details of the prospect, being short-sighted. But short-sightedness has this to be said for it : it enhances the mystery of things—if you see what looks like a pig and find it turn out to be a heap of stones or a hen-coop, a sort of negative zest is added to life.

I had the place to myself, up on the hill in front of the Mulini Palace ; there was nobody visible—yet Porto Ferraio seemed full of ghosts that night. Ghosts in the erstwhile Palace behind me—ghosts of card-parties, like that of Cecilia, Archibald and the rest of the chorus down there—yet, I sincerely trust, with a material difference, which shall presently be explained. Listening in the stillness, broken only by sounds of singing

and twanging from below, or the clatter of a belated cart, one could almost hear the gallop of the Emperor and his escort returning late from some expedition into the remoter parts of the island. On such occasions—so M. Paul Gruyer was informed by an old inhabitant—it was the custom of those who occupied houses abutting on the roadway leading to the Mulini to display, each man in his window, a candle, so that, the road being usually villainous, the monarch and his suite might have light, and take no harm. They did this out of no compulsion, but from sheer goodwill. In a very few months Elbans had learnt to love their king.

Ghosts of card-parties ! One historic card-party comes to my memory. I have compared those Napoleonic gatherings with that now being held beneath the roof of the Bee by Cecilia and the chorus, but I hoped that the conditions were not precisely similar. The Great Man had, latterly as I trust, contracted an unfortunate habit of cheating at cards.

A game of cards he regarded somewhat in the light of a battle. It had to be won at all costs. But, though admittedly all is fair in

war as in love, it did not occur to him that the extension of the principle to other pursuits might well lead to misunderstanding.

Most of those who played with him recognised this little foible, and bore their losses in silence. Not so Madame Mère. This venerable lady regarded money as a serious matter, and, having fairly won it, was not anxious to see her winnings go. On the occasion to which I refer, she did see them go, and was up in arms.

“Napoleone !” she remonstrated in a mild but stern voice, and the Corsican accent which she never lost. “*Vous vous trompez. Je vous assure !*”

Her son arose in wrath, gathered up all the money and left the room. He went, in fact, to bed. Next morning he returned their lawful winnings to his fellow-players (who had, unlike Madame Mère, seen them go without saying a word), but he made an exception. That exception was his mother. “She can afford to lose better than I,” he remarked when questioned on the subject.

The Emperor’s process of going to bed was, during those Elban days, marked by a peculiar ceremony. Nine o’clock was his hour for

retiring. As soon as the clock struck he would get up, and go to the piano. On this instrument he would strike the following notes, we are told (though I have no clear idea as to their significance) :

“Doh, doh, sol, sol, la, la, sol, fa, fa, mi, mi, re, re, doh.”

The entertainment concluded, he marched off to bed. On some evenings he would talk of old days, and explain why he had been beaten. “*C’était écrit*” was his favourite expression in this connection.

If anybody contradicted him he would say nasty things at once. An awkward silence would naturally follow, during which His Majesty would calm down gradually, and conclude by shaking hands with the delinquent, remarking, “We are like lovers, you and I—a little out of sorts at times. But lovers make it up and are the fonder of each other. *Bonne nuit et sans rancune.*” Some took the apology in good part—others did not.

More ghosts ! Princess Pauline, the fair, lovable and laughter-loving, who made mock at all the solemn ceremonies of State upon which her brother insisted in his tiny Elban

palace. She it was, nevertheless, who started the series of State balls which marked the close of Napoleon's reign. I call them State balls, but they had none of the formality which the Emperor loved. He was jealous for the feelings of his subjects. He begged Pauline, out of consideration for them, to refrain from wearing her diamonds at these functions, and Pauline laughed and consented.

She got up plays at the Mulini, in which the most "facetious" of the Court officials took part. It was the example set by these that made Porto Ferraio suddenly launch out into a project for a theatre—or Opera House as it was finally decided. The Emperor gave them a disused church for the purpose, which was rapidly converted into a form befitting its new walk in life. All the richest people tried to buy boxes, and most of them succeeded, becoming thereby life-proprietors—but there were not enough boxes to go round.

Pauline superintended all the operations. The Emperor was too busy; though no one, at that time, guessed the real reason for his preoccupation. Among other things, he was trying his hardest to get rid of Colonel Camp-



THE MULINI PALACE; PRESENT DAY

bell. News, moreover, had reached him, somewhere about that time, from the ex-king Joseph and Madame de Staël, that two Royalist spies were even then setting out for Elba. Assassins would be a better word. Louis XVIII's nerves were getting severely shaken. His brother monarch of Elba once more loomed large, a monster, as he had done in the days of his triumphs. The French king—insecure of his flimsy throne—felt that he had good excuse for winking at the acts of his supporters.

Napoleon, during this period, as I think I have already said, went, or professed to go, in continual fear of assassination. How far this was a genuine fear I am unable to say. Even M. Paul Gruyer in his wonderful book "*Napoléon. Roi de l'Ile d'Elbe*"—the most fascinating piece of historical work that our generation has seen—leaves it somewhat doubtful. In all probability there were one or two occasions (of which the Emperor had due warning) of real peril, which was of course duly provided against, and the prospective victim made the most of these as an excuse for cutting off his island as far as possible from regular communication with the main-

land, so that his preparations for the ultimate flitting might continue undetected.

The escape of the Exile was as dramatic as his coming. On the evening of the 25th Napoleon said good-bye to his mother, as they walked, in the brilliant moonlight, through the gardens of the Mulini.

“You must repeat this to nobody,” he commanded, “not even to Pauline. But, my mother I must tell. I leave here to-morrow night.” Unmoved, the Spartan matron queried, “Where are you going?”

“To Paris. Now that you know my decision, what do you advise?”

For a moment she pondered, then said slowly, weighing her words: “My son—if you must die, God, who has not willed it that your death should come by reason of idleness unworthy of you” (Elban kingship, I suppose), “wills not either that it shall be by poison, but by the sword. Sword in hand shall you die—when the time comes.”

Poor lady, she did not foresee St. Helena.

That night the Emperor drew up three proclamations (and had them printed at once)—to the People, the Army, and the Guard. The six English tourists gained ac-

cess to the Mulini the day after the escape. They found the water still in the bath, a book—a "History of Charles V"—open on the little table beside his bed, and the bedroom littered with scraps of torn paper. These may well have been fragments of the rough copies of the three proclamations.

On the evening of the 26th, between 7 and 8 in the evening (19 and 20 o'clock, Orestes would call it), the flotilla was ready. Everyone was on board—horses, stores, carriages, ammunition and all. Only the Emperor and Bertrand lingered. They drove down to the harbour in a little red-wheeled trap drawn by a couple of Pauline's ponies. They were rowed on board the *Inconstant*. Even then, across the miles of dark water, at Leghorn, Campbell was already on board the British corvette, hastening back—or trying to hasten, for there was no wind.

The calmness of that night had its drawbacks. Propelled by sweeps ("Sweeps!" exclaimed Cecilia in genuine amazement when I told her the narrative. "Well, I never! But then, he was quite an extraordinary man, wasn't he?") they made but little way, and gradually, all too gradually, the brilliant

illuminations of Porto Ferraio (for this was another candle "affair") receded.

"As he had come," writes M. Gruyer, "in the first flush of morning, so he went away in the mystery of the night, and so rapidly had the time sped that it seemed but the eventide of one long day."

So they went on laboriously. If no wind came (perhaps the big headland to the south was keeping it off), or if an adverse wind should arise, there was the danger of falling in with the corvette. She would fire. The sound of her guns would attract the French frigates cruising round the island and Corsica—and it would be all up with the King of Elba's abdication. Napoleon, in his grey military cloak, paced the after-deck of the *Inconstant* and waited. There was nothing else to be done.

For four hours they waited. Midnight brought a light wind. Fishermen, sent out to observe, returned reporting a fresh southerly breeze in the open. Truly they were favoured of Providence. A southerly wind would bring them in quick time to the coast of France, and at the same time keep Campbell bottled up at Leghorn. All hands took to the oars

so as to get clear of the bay and its screen of mountains as rapidly as might be.

The rest of the flotilla moved in silence, guided by the lantern dangling from the brig's mainmast. And so the ten months' day of Elba's glory passed.

CHAPTER XIV

QUICK CURTAIN

I AM not sure whether it is yet time to descend to the Bee and rejoin the irksome chorus, who would no more think of coming out and soliloquising on the crest of Porto Ferraio's hill in December than of turning Mormons.

Not that I take credit to myself for the former proceeding—there was simply nothing else to do. The latter I did not at the moment contemplate.

The most pleasing ghost of all recurs once more—Pauline. She left the Island on the 2nd March and fell ill at Viareggio (where it is necessary to change trains with inconvenient celerity if you wish to journey from Florence to Genoa on a Sunday morning).

Recovering, she went on to Naples; her health could not stand the northern climates—even those of Italy. She never saw her brother again.

Ultimately she settled in Rome, and was reconciled to her husband, in whose arms she died at Florence "on the 19th June, 1825, at one o'clock in the morning." She asked that her face should be covered as soon as she was dead, and that no surgeon's knife should touch her.

I do not know whether Prince Borghese ever quite got over the episode of the shipwrecked furniture, which his illustrious brother-in-law impounded. I am inclined to think that, after all, it did "go out of the family," for though Napoleon made a present of the Mulini and its equipment to the town of Porto Ferraio, time's whirligig soon, it will be remembered, brought in the Grand Duke of Tuscany as sovereign ruler, who promptly confiscated anything worth confiscating.

Pauline's end was, comparatively speaking, a happy one.

The air was getting chilly, and the dampness all around began to make itself felt. I turned and slowly descended the Grand Staircase (the steps require careful watching, and the smooth mule-track up the middle is somewhat steep if one comes on it unawares), thinking of the morrow's programme. Rio

Marina, for example, we ought to see, in spite of its rustiness, if only for the sake of the honest Pons.

There was another hero of Rio Marina who obtained promotion with unusual celerity—and all owing to his presence of mind. He was a sergeant in the Elban National Guard—an ornament, doubtless, even to that ornamental body.

He was a big man and a kind ; so, when one day he saw his august ruler—who was inclined to corpulency—making an abortive attempt to mount his charger, he hesitated not a moment. The big man gripped the little man by the seat of his breeches and, despite frantic and undignified struggles, brought him down plump on to the saddle. Then in modesty the big man turned away—and the little man rode off, spluttering with wrath. Three days later—it may have been four—the courteous sergeant received his promotion—the epaulettes of a sub-lieutenant—promotion hurriedly granted lest it should ever be said that the sacred person of the Emperor had been touched by the hands of a common soldier.

Yes, Rio Marina must certainly be seen.

Also Capo Liveri, from time immemorial whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, the asylum of scallywags ; the City of Refuge, whither flocked in days gone by all the scoundrels of the mainland. I believe the inhabitants to-day are perfectly peaceful, law-abiding citizens, but it was not so in Napoleon's time. He had particular trouble with them over the collection of taxes. The Elbans had hailed their monarch with real delight. They were proud of him, and considered themselves remarkably fine fellows to have been thought worthy, by the great Powers, of having so distinguished a ruler forced upon them.

But the time came round duly when the same distinguished ruler found it necessary to prepare a Budget for the year 1815. On the 1st of January in that year he had been compelled to suspend the mail-boat service to the mainland on the score of economy. The budget for the Imperial Household had run to 500,000 francs in 1814. This must be cut down to 380,000 francs. The postmen were dispensed with, and soldiers took their place. More economy. The officers' mess had been abolished, and one of the Imperial

architects dismissed. Various horses were sold from the Imperial stables—personnel reduced all round, also wages. The king was economising with a vengeance—but in spite of it all, taxes had to be levied on the unhappy islanders if the year's expenses were to be met—or to put the same thing in other words, if the Flight was going to be satisfactorily carried through. But the Islanders had no desire to pay up. It was all very well to be blessed with an Emperor as king, but the honour itself was quite sufficient. In every village where the noble souls who had undertaken the odious task of collecting tried to read out their assessments, they were shouted down.

Napoleon appealed to the clergy. These begged their respective flocks no more “to bring sorrow to the paternal bosom of their sovereign.” They were flouted in their own churches. Nobody would pay a sou. The paternal bosom of a sovereign was all very well, but if it was going to coin itself into shekels, they had no use for it.

They requested Colonel Campbell to intercede, deeming him top-dog for the moment. He refused point-blank. Then they gave in—all except Capo Liveri.

True to its rather unpleasant reputation—the “New Sicilian Vespers” will doubtless be remembered in this connection—Capo Liveri took off its coat and invited the collectors to “come on,” like Mr. Snodgrass, only in a rather more blood-thirsty manner. In fact they declared their intention of shooting any such persons who might think fit to “come on.” Led by their parish priest, they effectually routed the force of gendarmes sent to enforce payment. Then Napoleon got really cross. He demanded three ringleaders (including the parish priest aforesaid) to make an example of. Capo Liveri snapped its fingers. This was too much. Out marched Drouot, with 200 soldiers and 20 gendarmes. The three guilty ones were captured—the rebellious inhabitants cowed, and the prisoners marched off to the capital, where—so like Napoleon, King of Elba—they all three received a free pardon some days later. Yes—Capo Liveri was also a place to be seen. The two projected visits would involve our staying in the island yet two more days. That would be quite feasible, and would leave us ample time to get to Cecilia’s Aunt Winifred’s establishment at Twickenham,

where we were due, within the week, for a long-deferred visit.

There is nothing inherently ridiculous in the word "Twickenham"—as a word. I do not think there is a Lord Twickenham, as yet, but there is no earthly reason why there should not be one as soon as His Majesty thinks fit, seeing that humble Battersea itself has not been deemed unworthy.

Yet that evening on the Grand Staircase of Porto Ferraio, with the shadow of Napoleon over all, the very thought of Twickenham seemed unaccountably grotesque. It would have been the same with Thames Ditton or Surbiton, but I did not think of that.

I entered the portals of the Bee with a foolish grin, and, piloted by that obliging insect in person, ascended to the apartment where the gamblers sat. They had finished their gambling.

"Here you are at last!" cried Cecilia. "Well, you two certainly are the strangest couple. I don't think Orestes enjoyed staying behind a bit."

"He did not," I agreed. "He says he will be the dead corpse."

"Oh, poor man, I do hope it's not quite so bad as all that," cooed Irene.

"Orestes is a humbug," said Archibald. "Where has he got to now?"

"He has gone out," I explained, "on a mysterious errand—to find out some things."

"You seem to allow that chap of yours to do pretty damn well as he pleases," said milord. "I wouldn't stand it."

"If it hadn't been for him, we shouldn't be here," Cecilia explained.

"That's just what I mean," growled the milord; "we should have cleared out of the place hours, days, ago. I'm going to-morrow morning."

"*We* aren't," I announced cheerfully. "There are two more places that we really must see, and that will take us two more days—Rio Marina, most interesting."

"Filthy hole, what?" muttered milord.

"And Capo Liveri. We can't miss them," I continued, elated at the thought of the exodus of the Harrisons. "We may just as well do the thing properly while we are about it. It's fine now. A lovely night. It'll be all right to-morrow—one of those real Italian days."

There came a tap at the door. Orestes entered. He advanced to the centre of the apartment and stood there—thumbs in waist-coat—legs straddled. He seemed perturbed. “I tell you, sir,” he said to me, all eyes fixed on him, “after dinner I go find tings out.”

“You did.” I spoke a bit sharply, because I felt sure that Orestes had stumbled on another of his convenient mares’ nests.

“And I do find dem out, sir. Dey is ver’ bad tings.”

“The gardener told you, I suppose,” sneered Archibald, and Irene laughed a little to show that she thought he was funny.

“I suppose,” she added, “they have a kind of town gardener here, to tell people things. Why are Italian gardeners so talkative? I should have thought they’d have had enough to do to look after their gardens properly.”

“Or was it the barber?” enquired Cecilia, catching the note of sarcasm. “I suppose he can talk while he is cutting people’s hair.”

“’E was neider,” said Orestes solemnly. “’E was de fellow at de Cinema show.”

“What did he say?” we asked with one voice.

“And dat dam cabman fellow,” continued Orestes, “I like ’im not. It matter no bit where I go—to take a drop of wine, to ’av, a tripe or a punch—get myself shaved—I look round me. Dere is always dat cabman fellow—de man dat drove us first. I do not like ’im. Dis evening I go to de Cinema show. He is dere. Sitting just be’ind. I get up. I go to de fellow at de door, and take ’im to look. ’E say, ‘What is up?’ I say, ‘Dis dam chap come everywhere wherever I go.’ I say, ‘I do not like ’im.’ ’E say, ‘Perhaps ’e follow you.’ I say, ‘I tink so too.’ Mistars and ladies, we leave by de boat to-morrow at a quarter to tirteen. It is de safe way.”

“Is that all the Cinema man said?” asked Archibald, and Irene twittered in support.

“Every word, sir,” said Orestes, laying his hand on his heart. “And ’e say more yet.” He looked round mysteriously. “I tell not dat to de ladies,” he added, and after making his bow of ceremony, he left the room.

“What’s the fellow talking about? Who’s following us? What the deuce do they mean by it?”

“So few visitors come to the island,” I replied guardedly, “and Orestes knows his own countrymen. He is Tuscan, you know, and the people here are Tuscans. Purest form of Italian, you know.”

“It doesn’t make much odds when you can’t understand a word of it,” said Archibald.

“Which reminds me,” I broke in. “How did you get along at the Mulini?”

“We didn’t,” said the milord brusquely. “Couldn’t make anybody understand us.”

“We thought,” Cecilia explained tactfully, “that Archibald understood Italian.”

“So I do,” protested the youth. “I can say *Parlate Italiano* and *ecco* and *si si* and *grazie*, and I can understand them when they are said to me—but when it comes to arranging beastly verbs in their proper tenses, and you don’t happen to know anything about their proper tenses——”

“We found a rather dirty-looking man—or it may have been only his complexion,” broke in Cecilia.

“ ‘The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,’ ” quoted Archibald dreamily.

“ Thank you, dear,” murmured Miss Harrison in rapt appreciation, whereat I started, and she blushed.

Hurriedly she continued, “ He seemed to be hanging about with nothing to do, and after a time Mr.—er—Archibald very kindly went up and spoke to him.”

“ What did he say ? ” I enquired.

“ You needn’t be so cocky about everything,” said Archibald in protest, and with some lack of respect. “ I said, ‘Ecco palazzo di Mulini,’ and he understood me perfectly. He said, ‘Si.’ I didn’t know what to say after that because I couldn’t think of a single word.”

“ The man thought we were mad, I think, dear, and went away,” said Cecilia, “ and we walked about the town afterwards, and got back just after you’d gone.”

A tap at the door, and Orestes stood before us again.

“ Pardon, misters and ladies. Dis a ver’ serious affair. A spying affair. We must depart by de piroscapo at a quarter before eight.”

“ I do wish you wouldn’t be so absurd,

Orestes," said Cecilia. "Who has been spying?"

"De mister in particular," responded Orestes. "'E was spyin' on de 'ill all de night after dinners. If I 'ad tought it, I would not 'ave gone to de Cinema show."

"I was only soliloquising," I protested.

"It is de same dam ting," said Orestes unmoved. "I tink dey put us in prisons. I like not dat. We must make all de 'aste. Dey tink we go by de oder piroscrafo at a quarter to tirteen. Dey is ver' strict 'ere about spying affair. We give dem de slip."

"Good heavens!" cried Cecilia.

"Italian prisons are awful, they say," declared Irene. "I remember Captain Skoyles who takes a great interest in that kind——"

"Let us go back," said the Fräulein, who had been listening attentively and making up her massive mind. "We must lose not time."

The ladies hurried from the room. "Damn cheek," said the milord; "we're British subjects. Isn't there a consul or somebody?" He rose from his chair and stalked fiercely to and fro. "I won't stand it. I'm damned if I will."

“ It can’t be helped, it seems,” said I, and rang the bell for the Bee, who presently appeared with his bill, which I am glad to say was there and then settled, to the satisfaction of all parties. Orestes accompanied him as interpreter.

“ ‘E say,” declared Orestes, “ ‘e ‘ope ver’ much to see us all again.”

Personally, I reciprocated the kindly sentiments of the Bee. He was a good man.

We didn’t get much sleep that night. When we dozed it was to dream of ourselves as lawful inmates of the commanding citadel at Porto Longone, incarcerated in solitary confinement for a term of years, instead of peaceful British tourists seeking mementoes of Napoleon the Great. We dreamt too of the British consul—who appeared in various forms, sometimes as Orestes, sometimes as one of the many gardeners, sometimes as Aunt Winifred, doing his best for us in vain.

At six, Orestes knocked loudly at the door. “ We make ready now quickly,” he said, and passed on to the others.

We made ready, and descended to the Hall

of Eating. The others were already assembled. The Bee had provided coffee and rolls, but most of us had no appetite for such. We peered through the window expecting each minute to see any phenomenon from a squad of soldiers to a single gendarme mounting the steps to hale us to prison.

“Now we start,” said Orestes. “We go not togeder. Dat is not safe. Milord 'Arrison 'e go first wid de Signora ” (i.e. Cecilia). They went. Next Archibald and Irene were despatched with the Fräulein as escort. Last Orestes and myself.

We walked down the steps with as unconcerned an air as we could muster. We affected to be persons taking a morning promenade. Nothing more.

Day broke bright and sunny. The air had a pleasant nip in it. So far no molestation. We had not seen one policeman, no—nor even a gardener. Reaching the quay, we walked a few steps, to divert the suspicion of possible watchers—the cabman fellow, for example—in the direction opposite to that in which the steamer was visible.

Then we turned, and strolled leisurely towards it, casting furtive glances about us.

Arrived at the gangway, we stood as if astounded. Had we, collectively, been the immortal Wemmick, we should without doubt have exclaimed, "Hullo! here's a steamer. Let's go on board."

We went on board, however, without a word, and hid ourselves in the saloon, where the others were already crouching, if I may so put it.

"Do you think they saw us?" asked Cecilia, who had been peering through a little port-hole. "I can't see anyone about—not a soul."

"Dey are dam clever fellows, Signora," replied Orestes. "You would not see dem. Ah!"

A step sounded on the stairway. We braced ourselves for the ordeal.

It was only the steward. "Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Irene, as the propeller began to rumble. We were saved.

Being saved, we, with one accord, went on deck, to the disappointment, as I think, of the steward.

The wide blue bay blinked happily in the glory of the morning sun. The terraced houses of Porto Ferraio smiled at us like friendly

faces, bidding us return, and that soon. The fringe of mountain peaks—with their shadowy tree-clad gorges and sunlit rocks—held once more the very secret of romance, as at our coming. And in the midst shone the white ribbon of road leading to Marciana, and the Exile's Hermitage on Monte Gioro.

I was sore at leaving Elba—the Island of Islands.

The *Lily of Leghorn* was bravely breasting the billows of the Mediterranean, when I found Orestes again. He ascended from the saloon, wiping his moustache.

“What was there for us to spy about? Why did they make all that fuss?” I asked. We were comparatively safe now, but I felt that I was entitled to an explanation.

“I know not at all, sir,” said Orestes, seating himself complacently upon a heap of “luggages.”

“Were they going to arrest us?”

“I do not know, sir. I know nodings.”

“Then why have you bundled us out of the place, before we'd seen what we'd wanted to see? There was no danger at all, and you know it. What's the meaning of this nonsense?”

FORT STELLA



“No, dere was no danger,” admitted Orestes, after a pause. “Dere was no danger, Signore. But I am old, and I am ’eavy, Signore. I am dam sick of dat beastly island. Dere is only one London.”

ENVOI

TO those readers who have been generous enough to accompany me through this faithful but disjointed narrative some apologies are due.

I must apologise in the matter of the Harrisons. They were an excrescence, but not a wilful excrescence. They were there, and I had to mention them.

I must also apologise for leaving undone that which the literary craftsman would have felt himself bound in honour to do. He would have paired off Irene and Archibald, and indicated wedding bells at no distant date. He might too have inspired the Fräulein with a hopeless passion for myself.

Nothing of the sort happened.

These people went as they came. Archibald returned, unperturbed, to his studies; Irene, I presume, to the "gay, the gay and festive scene; the halls, the halls of

dazzling light " as Mr. Silas Wegg phrases it. So far as I know they never read verses to each other again. I feel that I may have been unjust to Fräulein Braun. She may not have said enough in these pages ; but inasmuch as she invariably said the same thing, when called upon, I had to omit most of her observations for variety's sake.

We parted at Leghorn. We stopped there the night. They hied them off to Florence and the usual Marathon race through the galleries. That was the Harrisons all over.

THE END





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